



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

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

**Dydd Mercher, 7 Rhagfyr 2011
Wednesday, 7 December 2011**

Cynnwys Contents

Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

Gweithredu Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2009: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence Session

Gweithredu Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2009: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence Session

Cynnig Gweithdrefnol
Procedural Motion

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

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

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

Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Jocelyn Davies	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Suzy Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
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**

Ian Dickson	Is-bennaeth, Cwricwlwm, Cynllunio ac Ansawdd, Coleg Glannau Dyfrdwy Vice Principal, Curriculum, Planning and Quality, Deeside College
John Graystone	Prif Weithredwr ColegauCymru Chief Executive, CollegesWales
Mark Jones	Pennaeth Coleg Penybont ac Uwch Is-gadeirydd ColegauCymru Principal, Bridgend College and Senior Vice-Chair, CollegesWales
Terry O'Marah	Cadeirydd, Llywodraethwyr Cymru Chair, Governors Wales
Hugh Patrick	Is-Gadeirydd, Llywodraethwyr Cymru Vice Chair, Governors Wales

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

Claire Griffiths	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk
Siân Thomas	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.14 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.14 a.m.*

**Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Good morning, everyone. I welcome you to the Children and Young People Committee. We have had an apology today from Angela Burns.

9.15 a.m.

**Gweithredu Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2009: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence
Session**

[2] **Christine Chapman:** Today, we will be taking evidence from Governors Wales. I would like to welcome to the meeting Terry O'Marah, the chair of Governors Wales, and Hugh Pattrick, the vice-chair of Governors Wales. Thank you both for attending today. Members will have read your paper, so thank you for that. If you are happy, we will go straight to questions.

[3] **Mr O'Marah:** Yes, that is fine. May I just present Jane Morris's apologies? She should have been here, but her mother is seriously ill.

[4] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, she did contact us. Thank you for that. I will start the questions. How effective is the requirement to offer 30 courses, including five vocational courses, as a way of increasing choice for the learner?

[5] **Mr O'Marah:** We would say that it has been fairly effective. There are areas of the country where it has been less effective. Hugh is in a better position to talk about those because he comes from a very rural part of Wales where collaboration is much more difficult because of distance and time. We are fairly sure that there is pretty good compliance with the Measure, which is slightly different from saying that there is always an equal standard with regard to the range and quality of what is being offered.

[6] **Christine Chapman:** Has this had an impact on the number of young people studying modern foreign languages or even Welsh as a second language, for example?

[7] **Mr O'Marah:** I do not think that we would have the evidence to say that the Measure has caused that. Foreign languages were in decline prior to the Measure. In my school, there has been a sudden resurgence in uptake, but there are varying reasons for that. We have had a change of staff teaching modern languages. It has been more successful, and young people often take courses that they know have been successful in a school. Good teaching attracts students. So, we do not have the evidence to say that the Measure is the cause of a further decline in modern languages. It cannot have helped, because the more courses that you offer, the smaller the uptake will be on a number of those courses. What you offer is not always viable and the smaller the school, the bigger that bigger problem.

[8] **Mr Pattrick:** If I may go back to the first part of your question, the situation is very variable in rural Wales because, with falling school numbers, there is less of an ability on the part of individual schools to offer the more vocational subjects. Although there is a great deal of co-operation between schools and, increasingly, in my county of Powys, the college, it is very early days yet. Although more courses can be offered as part of a network, which is what we are trying to do, there are great problems with transport and with trying to have timetables that work with each other rather than people doing their individual things. As I said, it is very early days, and the transport is a particular problem. We are finding that pupils do not like travelling long distances. In our case, we are talking about pupils travelling up to 40 miles.

There are some pupils who have started and then withdrawn because they cannot cope with that. There are also the problems of working across boundaries. In my county, they are paying for someone to travel 40 miles, but they will not pay for them to go 10 miles if they are going to cross a boundary.

[9] **Christine Chapman:** We will come on to the issue of transport, but thank you for that; it is an important point. With regard to my question, are you concerned about the level of understanding that some teachers may have with regard to teaching different sorts of courses? Do you have any evidence on that?

[10] **Mr O'Marah:** I do not know that we have collected that evidence in respect of Governors Wales. We can talk about our personal experience of our schools, but, as Governors Wales, I do not think we have that evidence.

[11] **Mr Pattrick:** I think that there is a bit of trepidation among teachers because many are not yet into the culture of what it is really all about—this ability to move between sites and so on. It is too early to say. It will come, but it will take time to be embedded.

[12] **Keith Davies:** Bore da. Yr wyf am sôn am y cyrsiau galwedigaethol. A yw'r Mesur wedi gwella'r parch cydradd rhwng cyrsiau galwedigaethol a chysiau academaidd? **Keith Davies:** Good morning. I want to talk about vocational courses. Has the Measure helped to improve parity of esteem between vocational courses and academic courses?

[13] **Mr O'Marah:** That is a fairly complex question; I would ask, 'Parity of esteem by whom?' The Measure has improved choice for a lot of young people, and it has improved the attitude that they have towards education. They feel that they are learning something that will bring profit and is of use to them. I would hesitate to say that it has enhanced the appreciation of vocational courses among middle-class parents—you will understand why I use that label. As a registered inspector for Estyn, I have personal experience of inspecting a very well-disposed school in south Wales, where inspectors were concerned that no vocational courses were being offered. That was before the introduction of the Measure. The response was that those courses were being offered, but that parents would not let their children take them. Until we move to a point where our traditional A-level students are happy to pursue A-level engineering or technical studies, and until those students and the universities consider those courses to be of equal merit, it will be difficult to establish parity of esteem between vocational and academic courses. More people are pursuing vocational courses, and a range of pupils find them more useful and valuable than traditional academic courses, but there are some pupils and parents—and wider society, perhaps—who say that vocational courses are always a second choice.

[14] **Keith Davies:** Yr oedd cyrsiau adeiladwaith yn cael eu rhedeg ar un amser a oedd yn canolbwyntio ar hyfforddi rheolwyr ac nid gweithwyr. Gobeithiwyd y byddai'r cyrsiau hynny'n cyrraedd lefel 2 ac y byddai mwy o blant yn eu dilyn. Yn y pen draw, nid oedd y plant eisiau gwneud hynny. Efallai mai'r rheswm yw bod prinder arbenigedd ar gyrsiau galwedigaethol yn yr ysgolion, a bod yr athrawon yn yr ysgolion hynny heb fod mewn diwydiant o gymharu â darlithwyr yn y colegau. Efallai nad yw'r athrawon hynny cystal â'r darlithwyr wrth ddysgu cyrsiau galwedigaethol. **Keith Davies:** At one time, construction courses were being run that concentrated on training managers rather than workers. It was hoped that those courses would reach level 2 and that more pupils would choose them. Ultimately, the children did not want to do so. Perhaps the reason is that there is a lack of expertise on vocational courses in schools, and that teachers in those schools do not have industry experience compared with college lecturers. Perhaps those teachers are not as good as the lecturers at teaching vocational courses.

[15] **Mr O'Marah:** There is probably some truth in that. To offer a particular example again, my school is in a sixth-form consortium that has been going for 19 years. Collaboration is nothing new. The local college, Deeside College, has come in and out of the consortium—it is now back in—where there are very qualified people teaching these courses. However, they still do not attract the pupils whom we would traditionally have called A-level students. It is a circular argument: until vocational courses have parity of esteem with academic courses, it is difficult to attract teachers and to direct them to a career path that involves those courses, and it is difficult to attract the better students. It is my personal view—not that of Governors Wales—that this is what we have failed to do in this country for many years. Even when we offered level 2 vocational courses, we did not call them A-levels but vocational A-levels. We had to add that second label that devalued them. This is a personal view. We have to get that parity of status and a progression through the course that allows pupils of middle ability to go from level 1 to levels 2 and 3.

[16] **Mr Patrick:** There are some teachers, albeit a minority, who have worked in industry before they came into teaching. They bring with them an experience of life that is very useful for the young people whom they teach, in contrast to having gone straight from school to university and back to school.

[17] **Aled Roberts:** Symudaf ymlaen i gyllid. Yr wyf yn sicr eich bod yn ymwybodol o'r newidiadau yn y grant sydd ger eich bron. Sut y bydd y newidiadau hyn yn effeithio ar weithredu'r Mesur yn y man cyntaf? Yn ogystal, a ydych yn pryderu ynghylch cynaliadwyedd y Mesur, o ystyried y cwtogiad yn y gyllideb?

Aled Roberts: I will move on to funding. I am sure that you are aware of the changes in the grant before you. How will these changes affect the implementation of the Measure in the first place? In addition, are you concerned about the sustainability of the Measure, in light of the funding cut?

[18] **Mr Patrick:** We are very concerned about these cuts and the sustainability of the Measure. It needs work. In our area, we have tried to make things more efficient to ensure that the number of courses can be run, but it is very difficult. This is still run on a county basis in many parts, and it should not be. There are question marks about the future. The theory is fine, and we want to do the best for our young people. However, we need the resources.

[19] **Mr O'Marah:** From a governors' point of view, it is the same as with running anything else. You have to have the resources to deliver the curriculum that you want. You have to be able to resource the wider range of courses that you offer in order to teach them. Potentially, not all of the courses will be viable. Some of the staff whom you allocate may be part-time and some may be full-time. That produces knock-on problems in relation to your staffing and timetabling, if some of your courses do not get sufficient uptake to run. Going back to the specifics, it is less of a problem for our consortium because there are four schools, and that gives us greater flexibility in managing resources and gives us a total of around 300 students. That means that we get to know what the local favourites will be in terms of uptake. For smaller schools collaborating in a less formal structure, or collaborating with a college, it will be more difficult, because they will not have any margin for error in timetabling or planning.

[20] The big funding issue relates to transport. We are all suffering in relation to the current sixth-form, post-16 funding model. Cash is limited. At our schools, we are dealing with more students on the same money that we had last year. That is producing stresses. Our big problem will be that the local education authority is telling us that it is going to cease funding our transport around the consortium from next year, so we will have to try to find that funding from within the consortium's own budget. If the students decided to go to the local further education college, they would have their transport paid for. It seems a nonsense,

really, that you can get your transport paid for travel to one institution but not for others.

[21] **Mr Pattrick:** Mid Wales is moving towards a commissioning basis, whereby all of the courses will be commissioned centrally. So, it will be decided centrally what money is available and where the courses will take place. That is likely to put pressure on what individual schools can offer. It is about balancing that and the transport costs of moving students to a more central point.

[22] **Aled Roberts:** Mae nifer o dystion wedi sôn am y system gyllido. Eu barn nhw yw bod y system gyllido, ar hyn o bryd, yn dueddol o arwain at gystadlu rhwng ysgolion. Beth yw eich barn ynghylch y modd y mae'r gyfundrefn yn cael ei hariannu ar hyn o bryd? **Aled Roberts:** A number of witnesses have spoken about the funding system. In their opinion, the funding system currently tends to lead to competition between schools. What is your opinion about the way in which the system is funded at present?

[23] **Mr Pattrick:** There still is competition between schools. They are beginning to collaborate; it is a new culture and it will take time. However, because people want to keep their jobs, they will do everything that they can to ensure that each school will offer what they can. They are not really working together yet; it is coming, but it will come slowly. There is not a lot that one can do about that, because one has to reassure people.

9.30 a.m.

[24] **Mr O'Marah:** I suspect that it varies with each area in Wales, because of different school structures and geography. Again, to go into specifics, our consortium has been running for 19 years and there is no competition between the schools. Students know that they are going to a joint sixth form. We even get a summary of secondary school performance published now for the consortium.

[25] Estyn has a problem when it comes to the consortium in terms of inspecting. It could come to my school and observe an A1 science lesson in which there were no students from the school, so it cannot actually inspect standards. The consortium has lived together for so long that there is no competition. It is all about co-operation and that has now spread to 14 plus, and heavily involves Deeside College. When things are new, there are tensions and stresses as people seek to establish ground rules, ownership and who does what. The longer that it goes on, the more comfortable they will get and the more they will trust each other.

[26] **Christine Chapman:** A couple of Members want to come in on that. Jocelyn is first, then Keith.

[27] **Jocelyn Davies:** It is nothing new for you, and seems to work well from what you have said and the examples that you have given. Why did it require legislation for other parts of Wales to put that into practice? Would it have happened in other parts of Wales without the legislation?

[28] **Mr O'Marah:** To put the historical bit in its context, it happened for us because it had to. The four schools' sixth forms were declining to a point where they would have ceased to be viable on their own. It arose from economic reasons more than from educational ones. That is probably true in many parts of Wales, but, as Hugh said, it is not easy in some places. Our four schools are within eight miles of each other along a straight road, almost. So, our transport is a bus that runs up and down that road. It is far more complex in mid Wales. Educationally, schools want to do the best that they can. Traditionally, there has been competition with FE colleges for post-16 students.

[29] **Keith Davies:** Nid wyf yn deall un **Keith Davies:** I do not understand one thing.

peth. Sonioch am y pedair ysgol a bod plant yn dod o ysgol arall i'ch ysgol chi i wneud, er enghraifft, lefel A Ffrangeg, ac nad oedd un plentyn o'ch ysgol chi yn y dosbarth hwnnw. Beth ddywedoch am gludiant wedyn? Am fod y plant yn teithio o ysgol arall i'ch ysgol chi, nid oes cludiant am ddim, ond pe bai'r plant yn mynd i astudio lefel A mewn coleg, byddent yn cael cludiant am ddim. Ai dyna a ddywedoch?

You talked about the four schools and said that children come from other schools to yours to study, for example, A-level French, but that there was not one child from your school in that class. What did you say about transport then? Given that the children are travelling from another school to yours, there is no free transport, but, if they went to study an A-level at college, they would get free transport. Is that what you said?

[30] **Mr O'Marah:** At present, the authority pays the transport costs for the consortium. We are told that, as part of its cost-saving measures, it is seriously considering withdrawing that funding in the next financial year. However, FE college students can travel from Hawarden to Yale College in Wrexham, and Yale provides the bus. The FE colleges provide that. We will have to see whether we can fund the transport costs out of the consortium's budget.

[31] **Mr Pattrick:** That varies throughout Wales. In my county, the county council has said that it will, for the time being, pay post-16 transport costs. However, it is discretionary. If that went, the post-16 provision would collapse.

[32] **Mr O'Marah:** One of the successes of the consortium and the Measure operating together, and ensuring that there is full provision, is that sixth formers who want to do two A-levels and a vocational course, can now do so within the consortium. Previously, those students would have needed to go to college to do that vocational course, and so would have taken those two A-levels there also, so the school system would have lost those students. It now retains more; numbers in the consortium's sixth form have increased.

[33] **Mr Pattrick:** We also find that young people like to have a sense of belonging. Necessity may mean that they have to travel somewhere else to undertake a course, but they tend to lose that sense of belonging, and some of them, particularly the more vulnerable ones, will just withdraw, because they feel safe and happy in their own little community. I know that things have to move on, but we have to take all of these things into account as well.

[34] **Mr O'Marah:** I would just add that it took us a long time to get pastoral care for post-16 students right when they move between institutions, the record-keeping and the use of IT in ensuring that counselling and guidance are in place. They now all have to spend the last afternoon of the week at their home school with their tutors and mentors to catch up on all the record-keeping for the week. We did not do that in the beginning, and some got a bit lost as they wandered around. It takes time to get all of the systems perfect and in place.

[35] **Aled Roberts:** Hoffwn gael esboniad o'r sefyllfa ym Mhowys. Dywedasoch fod y rhwydwaith yn penderfynu pa gyrsiau sy'n cael eu darparu ymhob ysgol; a yw holl ysgolion Powys wedi cytuno i'r sefyllfa honno?

Aled Roberts: I would like an explanation of the situation in Powys. You said that the network decides which courses are provided in each school; have all of Powys's schools agreed to that situation?

[36] **Mr Pattrick:** They will not have to agree; they will be told. [*Laughter.*] The idea is that, in the short term, it will be done centrally by the local authority, and it will move towards a separate commissioning organisation that may be part of the college or may be a completely new organisation. However, the plan put forward by the county council is that it will decide.

[37] **Aled Roberts:** There is obviously a lot more compliance in Powys than in some other areas. [*Laughter.*]

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

[39] **Jenny Rathbone:** What role do governors play in that?

[40] **Mr Pattrick:** We have yet to find out. It has only been announced within the last month or so, and it was a cabinet decision, and not for consultation; the only consultation has been on the initial practicalities of organising and things, so we are yet to see. Schools have already started to try to work together, and the movement between schools and subjects and courses had already begun before the actual decision was made. That was forced upon them by the affordability of running courses in schools with falling numbers.

[41] **Christine Chapman:** We will move on now. Julie Morgan has the next question.

[42] **Julie Morgan:** I want to ask about some of the consequences of this collaborative working. Terry, you said that sixth forms were already declining in your particular area.

[43] **Mr O'Marah:** In this one part, yes.

[44] **Julie Morgan:** What about the sixth forms in your area, Hugh?

[45] **Mr Pattrick:** They are also declining, because some youngsters do not wish to go to a separate place and divide up their time. They tend to either not undertake a course or go off and do everything together somewhere else. We are on the borders with Swansea and Neath Port Talbot—Swansea more so—so it is easier to do that, whereas, in the middle of Powys, it is more difficult. In an ideal world, looking at it from the point of view of a young person, it may be a bit simplistic, but some young people do well in a college of further education because they are mature enough for it, while others need the pastoral support that a sixth form would continue to give. All right, it may not be possible with falling numbers to continue that, but it is going to be quite difficult—

[46] **Julie Morgan:** So, the sixth forms are declining.

[47] **Mr O'Marah:** Yes, they are declining, but the numbers of young people are declining more rapidly in mid Wales than elsewhere.

[48] **Julie Morgan:** Do you have an overall view of Wales as a whole?

[49] **Mr O'Marah:** In relation to what, sorry?

[50] **Julie Morgan:** In relation to sixth forms.

[51] **Mr O'Marah:** Whether they are growing or not?

[52] **Julie Morgan:** No; whether they are declining everywhere.

[53] **Mr O'Marah:** I think that there is a general trend of decline, but that is at different rates, particularly when the numbers in the school are falling.

[54] **Julie Morgan:** What about faith schools? Do you have any ideas about what is happening in those?

[55] **Mr O'Marah:** Faith schools? I would not have any evidence to say one way or the

other.

[56] **Julie Morgan:** Do the governors of faith schools meet with you as well, or are they separate?

[57] **Mr Pattrick:** No, we have had governors from those schools. One of our leading members was a minister from Monmouthshire, but he has now left. They take part, and different authorities involve them as part of a consortium, and, generally, not separately.

[58] **Mr O'Marah:** I did not want to give a false impression of Flintshire. What I was talking about was our consortium of four schools within Flintshire. All the schools developing 14-16 vocational courses in Flintshire operate together and are heavily dependent on Deeside College and the learning core centre, which has been a tremendous success. That is written up in the Estyn document that you have received as previous evidence. They are all now developing their collaboration as they deliver the full requirements of the Measure. So, there are different levels of development within Flintshire.

[59] **Julie Morgan:** Obviously, that is one that is quite well advanced, but, as the chair of Governors Wales, do you have an overview of what is happening throughout Wales?

[60] **Mr O'Marah:** In relation to numbers in sixth forms, we rely on Estyn reports, like everybody, I suspect. We do not conduct research specifically—

[61] **Julie Morgan:** No; I just wondered if you knew, through your contact with other governors, what is happening in faith schools, for example. Are the sixth forms declining?

[62] **Mr Pattrick:** We tend to involve them generally as part of the whole, rather than look at them in particular. No particular problems have been brought to our attention.

[63] **Christine Chapman:** I inform Members—and Terry and Hugh will be aware of this—that the director, Jane, who was not able to get here today because of personal problems, has said that if there were any other queries, she would write to us. Do not worry about that, because she said that we could get something in written form. So, if you require any other information, that will be okay.

[64] **Suzy Davies:** This is a question for Hugh specifically. You mentioned earlier that some students are being bussed 40 miles when there is an FE college only 10 miles down the road, but over the county border. I would imagine that in some parts of Powys there are already existing collaborative arrangements. I am thinking particularly of Aberystwyth and Dolgellau at the top end of the county there. Will regional consortium working help that? Can the arrangement be improved upon, or have you already reached maximum co-operation?

[65] **Mr Pattrick:** When you are talking about regional consortia, are you talking about things like the south-west and mid Wales consortium and so on?

[66] **Suzy Davies:** The new regional consortia that everyone will have to work to at local authority level.

[67] **Mr Pattrick:** I understand that they work differently depending on the consortia. The impression that I get, where governors are not involved in the consortia—in SWAMWAC and Powys at least—is that Powys is going to do its own thing rather than share expertise. It might have the same assessments and tools but it will not share staff, as far as I understand. However, as I said before, not paying cross-border transport costs may be a matter of protection, to try to keep as much within the county as possible given the falling numbers. We have undertaken some collaboration with Neath College in the past, but the

funding stopped before the Measure came in and the transport cost stopped. I think that Powys wanted to ensure that it filled all the further education places within the county as far as possible.

[68] **Suzy Davies:** Is that protectionist attitude, if I can call it that, another reason why sixth forms are perhaps reluctant to send their students to their nearest FE college, although it is not always near to them, is it?

[69] **Mr Patrick:** That is very true. Of course, there is another problem in that some of the areas of the county border England, and that brings other problems with regard to funding and other matters. Thinking of John Beddoes, Knighton and Presteigne, the school on the other side of the border is becoming an academy, so that might make it more difficult anyway.

[70] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you very much. Jocelyn?

[71] **Jocelyn Davies:** Do you think that there should be any changes to the Measure? I will let you have a little think about it and we can come back to it. [*Laughter.*] I know that the Measure as it stands places extra responsibilities on you as governors to increase collaboration in planning the local curriculum, to maximise the availability of courses and to procure youth support services. How are governors involved in the process of those things?

9.45 a.m.

[72] **Mr Patrick:** It is a little early to say. In some areas, schools are collaborating well but, again, in rural areas, with the distances involved, it is difficult for the governors to do that. There will be a joint committee of governors for the four schools that I am involved with, but one is nearly 40 miles away, and two are more than 30 miles away. The practicalities of the governors working together will be difficult. It is easier for the staff, because the headteachers and specialists meet. However, it is a little early to say.

[73] **Mr O'Marah:** I think that they will be feeling their way through this, much the same as headteachers, deputy headteachers and students are feeling their way through it. Going back to our long-standing consortium, a joint management group meets, which includes the four deputies, who organise the curriculum and timetable, and the governors. They then report back to their governing bodies. It co-ordinates the activities of the consortium. It is quite comfortable now because it has been going for so long. There must be stresses and things that come up when you start.

[74] They are concerned that the Measure does not exist in isolation. There are all sorts of other things going on in schools to help that and to work against it. Did the Measure cause an increase in sixth-form uptake in our area? We would like to think so. However, the education maintenance allowance also caused a fairly big uplift when it was introduced. My school has 36 per cent free-school-meal pupils, so the EMA was a significant factor in that.

[75] The jobs situation in the area is also a factor, because fewer jobs are available. Near Broughton, in Flintshire, there are good-quality jobs, and there are apprenticeships that act as a motivation to youngsters to succeed in school, to get into those high-quality jobs. There is a whole area of school modernisation and surplus places. The arguments are being rehearsed and consultation is being held in local authorities in different parts of Wales as to how that will be rationalised and sorted. This will impact upon post-16 education. So, there are all sorts of things that governors are currently coping with, not least, of course, are budget constraints over the next two or three years. The Measure is only part of a fairly large and complex programme being juggled. Can we afford this? Can we do that? What is the long-term future? There is a whole host of questions.

[76] **Mr Pattrick:** It is easier in more urban areas and some of the Valleys, although the feedback that I have is that there is still a protectionist view in individual schools. We are not quite there yet.

[77] **Jocelyn Davies:** With the planning of the provision, what role do governors take within their schools, never mind within the local area?

[78] **Mr O'Marah:** I suspect that the curriculum committee, however they title it in a particular school, will be presented with a traditional role, at the end of the spring term or early summer term, with the proposed curriculum coming from the management of the school for the following academic year. If that involves collaboration or block release to colleges, or whatever else, it will be on the curriculum plot. The curriculum committee will review it, ask any questions that they see fit of the senior staff, decide whether they are happy, and approve it. That will have to go on in each of the constituent schools of whatever the collaboration scheme is. They will all have to approve the curriculum because, in the end, the curriculum is the responsibility of the governing body. We have been going long enough for that to now be delegated to the joint group, but individual governors still see a plot and must approve it because it is a requirement.

[79] **Christine Chapman:** We have had these discussions with Governors Wales before, and it is a difficult question of loyalty to the institution as opposed to the wider educational achievements and aspirations of young people in the area. Do you sense any tension between those aspects as governors?

[80] **Mr Pattrick:** Yes. There are many different types of governors, are there not? There are those who are very protective of their school, but governors are becoming increasingly strategic—I hope so, anyway—because of the lack of finance, to make sure that we do the best that we can for young people. So, I hope that governors will not be so parochial and look at the much wider brief.

[81] **Jocelyn Davies:** Based on evidence that we have heard previously, courses are being offered knowing that students will not take them up just so that the box of offering enough courses can be ticked.

[82] **Mr O'Marah:** I have heard that anecdotally from one authority, but I could not vouch for its accuracy. I have no personal experience of that, but we have been going for so long that we are pretty clued up as to what the local market wants. However, I have heard that point made anecdotally—there is compliance in terms of an offer being made.

[83] To go back to your earlier question as to whether I would change the Measure, there will always be difficulties where you are fairly specific about a number, as opposed to a principle, a proportion, a percentage or some other way of defining it. If you define the number as being 30 courses and five vocational courses, some schools in some areas will find it very difficult to achieve that. We did not. It was all there—we tweaked it if anything was needed, and we met the requirement almost the day after the Measure became law. So, I am not claiming anything for that, because it was just there. Other areas had to work very hard to comply, so perhaps you can be too specific about numbers.

[84] **Mr Pattrick:** One of the major challenges is going to be responding to the needs of young people in planning courses in advance, because there is usually a rush at the last minute to sort out what courses will run, and it will depend whether these are commissioned centrally. Even if they are not, the planning will be the most important aspect. We want to do it early enough so that we have the right kind of courses for young people.

[85] **Mr O'Marah:** That is nothing new, but youngsters' success is what matters. If you put on courses that are meaningful and successful, and from which youngsters progress to further or higher education, or into jobs, and if you ensure that they are good courses and well taught, they will go for them. They quickly suss out which courses are not worth the time.

[86] **Christine Chapman:** I remind Members that we have about 21 minutes left and we have quite a lot to cover, so we will press on. We will move on to questions from Jenny Rathbone.

[87] **Jenny Rathbone:** What role have governors had in timetabling? What role, if any, do they have in resolving conflicts?

[88] **Mr O'Marah:** In respect of detailed timetabling, that is a job for the professional in schools. In terms of timetabling as a principle, that would be a decision that would have gone through the curriculum committee of governing bodies and reported on to the four schools' governors. So, the way in which you organise the overall principles and structure of the timetable would have to be agreed by the governors. If pupils are out of school, governors would need to give their approval for that. If you are moving to half-day blocks or a certain number of periods in the day, or whatever else, those decisions on principle would have been taken by the governing body.

[89] **Jenny Rathbone:** Are governors ever asked to resolve conflicts between different institutions, where, for example, conflict arises from their wanting to provide the same course?

[90] **Mr O'Marah:** I am trying to avoid the specifics of my area again, but I would guess not, because that would be done at a professional level.

[91] **Mr Pattrick:** Ultimately, if there was a joint committee of various institutions, that joint committee would do it. However, if it gets that far, there is something wrong at a professional level.

[92] **Jenny Rathbone:** That happens sometimes, does it not? We have heard evidence to the effect that some professionals want to run a course in order to save the job of individuals, and so on.

[93] **Mr O'Marah:** Certainly, we have heard anecdotally that the earlier issues were with colleges. There is a different culture and there are different structures. It is fairly easy to understand how your neighbouring school works and how you accommodate each other's timetable, but the situation is more complex with a college, as there are different structures, different attendance regulations and a different culture of working.

[94] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. So, governors have had to get used to the way in which colleges operate.

[95] **Mr O'Marah:** They have had to learn about each other's cultures, in a way.

[96] **Keith Davies:** Yn y Mesur, mae hawl i un cynrychiolydd o bob ysgol sefydlu panel sy'n edrych ar weithrediad y Mesur yn yr ardal. Yr wyf yn gwybod bod hyn yn wir, oherwydd fy mod yn un ohonynt. Yr wyf yn llywodraethwr dros nifer o ysgolion a cholegau. Yr wyf yn byw yn sir Gaerfyrddin, felly gwn fod hyn yn digwydd yno. A yw hyn

Keith Davies: In the Measure, a representative from each school has the right to establish a panel to look at the implementation of the Measure in the area. I know that this is true, because I am one of them. I am a governor for a number of schools and colleges. I live in Carmarthenshire, so I know that this happens

yn digwydd mewn unrhyw sir arall yng Nghymru? there. Does this happen in any other county in Wales?

[97] They are called joint governing bodies.

[98] **Mr Patrick:** I think that the easy answer is 'no'. The involvement of governors depends very much on the attitude of the local authority.

[99] **Mr O'Marah:** I am not quite sure what you mean, Keith, by 'joint governing bodies'.

[100] **Keith Davies:** I will explain what I mean. Last year, I was the chair of the 14-19 cluster for the four Llanelli comprehensive schools and the college. It was a joint governing arrangement, which the Measure suggests could be done. Carmarthenshire has done that. When we talk about timetabling, what courses are offered and where courses are offered, and when we talk about the annual network development plan, we work together.

[101] **Mr O'Marah:** That would be the same as the local 14-19 network in Flintshire and in many other counties.

[102] **Keith Davies:** Yes, but I am asking whether there is a governor network. I know that there are networks of headteachers, but those headteachers report to us in Carmarthenshire.

[103] **Mr O'Marah:** The network includes governors, but it is not specifically made up of governors.

[104] **Keith Davies:** Okay.

[105] **Mr Patrick:** I think that the answer is that it is variable.

[106] **Christine Chapman:** We have talked quite a bit about travel and transport, but would you like to add anything, Suzy?

[107] **Suzy Davies:** I have only one question on this, Chair. As governors, do you prefer to see the staff or the students travel?

[108] **Mr Patrick:** In this green world, it is more efficient if staff travel. However, unfortunately, it depends how many students are available for a particular course. Sometimes, you have to move the students to make a course viable. There is no way of getting around that. It is a question of looking at what is most efficient for the students and what is most efficient with regard to time and cost.

[109] **Mr O'Marah:** It often depends where the resources are. Many vocational courses depend heavily on a particular room, particular facilities and particular resources being available. By and large, within our consortium, it is the students who move. Teachers are teaching in their base with all of their equipment and resources to hand. There is a small movement of staff, but it is very small. By and large, it is the students who move. I could not tell you what the situation is across Wales, as I do not know.

[110] **Suzy Davies:** May I ask a second question on the back of that? We have already received evidence that timetabling and travel complications result in some students losing out on their core subjects. What is your view on that as governors?

[111] **Mr O'Marah:** Is that evidence that they are losing out on their core subjects?

[112] **Suzy Davies:** Yes, they are losing out on their core subjects. They are not able to make them up.

[113] **Mr O'Marah:** My reaction is that it would be wrong and unfortunate if they were to lose out on the core subjects just to acquire an additional vocational subject. On the specific point, our travel is all done before school, at lunchtime and after school. However, that is down to geographical happenstance. If you were in Powys, you would not get anywhere during the lunch break.

10.00 a.m.

[114] **Mr Pattrick:** There have been clashes in timetables, so they have not been able to fulfil the requirements. However, it is early days, so it might be a question of settling it in and sorting it all out.

[115] **Mr O'Marah:** There are a number of issues. As I said before, the Measure happens within a full context of things, such as published examination results, Estyn inspections and banding—I will not say any more about that—which has a different set of assumptions built into it. All of these pressures come in, and there is a balance in everything that you end up deciding, which should always be in favour of young people and the standards that they are achieving in what they want to achieve. However, that often means juggling four or five priorities at the same time. You talked about the core subjects, and English and mathematics are becoming increasingly important in judging a school's standards. So, every school will be reluctant to do anything that militates against due, proper and appropriate time being allocated to those two subjects particularly.

[116] **Suzy Davies:** That is happening now.

[117] **Lynne Neagle:** I want to ask you about learning support services. Can you tell us a little bit more about whether you feel that they are being delivered consistently across all schools, or are there significant variations in the methods of delivery for learning support services?

[118] **Mr O'Marah:** As far as I am aware, from conversations with colleagues, that is one area that is delivered particularly well. I would not say that it is being delivered in the same system everywhere, but it is an area within which schools are particularly concerned to do well. However, that is anecdotal evidence that I have gained in conversation with people; I have no hard evidence.

[119] **Mr Pattrick:** The role of learning coaches and people like that is quite well developed. There will probably be more co-operation between the schools as the collaboration moves forward. There may even be an opportunity for people to specialise more in that role and move from school to school.

[120] **Mr O'Marah:** A lot of improvements have been made in that whole area of pupil welfare, wellbeing, counselling and mentoring in the past few years. That not only applies to pupils with particular problems, but to all pupils in the school. Indeed, pupils are themselves engaging in the mentoring and counselling of other pupils, and as associate governors—there is a greater involvement of pupils. It is not just one thing. Learning coaches are, of course, involved in the careers service and so on, but a whole new and improving culture is developing around student wellbeing.

[121] **Lynne Neagle:** We heard a lot of evidence last week about the importance of parents in influencing young people's choices, and the challenges that that creates. Do you have any views on how we can ensure that parents have up-to-date information to help inform that

guidance?

[122] **Mr Pattrick:** Schools are well placed for that. Most schools have particular evenings on which they invite parents along to explain the whole system to them. It is all very well explaining the system to young people, who may know it already, but it is quite complicated for parents who will not have gone through the system as it is today. Schools should be very good at imparting information at secondary school level, and they should know the parents, having had regular contact with them from year 7 onwards. So, that should not be a difficulty.

[123] **Lynne Neagle:** Is there good engagement with parents and good attendance at those kinds of evenings?

[124] **Mr Pattrick:** The feedback that I have had is that, yes, usually there is, because people are interested in the future of their children.

[125] **Aled Roberts:** We heard evidence last week from certain networks that network-wide information about choices was provided, whereas there was evidence from other networks that, in a school situation in particular, just the information relevant to that particular school was provided. What is your experience?

[126] **Mr Pattrick:** Given that the courses available are going to be outlined centrally, it will not be just the school experience that is made available. All of the information about the whole network has been made available, particularly given that people must meet the requirements of the learning and skills Measure, and there will be a limited number of courses available in a particular school. So, you must allow the whole network's information to be available, otherwise you could well lose somebody from the sixth form if there is no variety. So, it is in the school's interest to make that information available.

[127] **Mr O'Marah:** Given the huge variation in schools across Wales, in size, culture, language, faith and everything else, there will be no single consistent model. I know of one school that has more students in its sixth form than we have in our consortium. Having to co-operate with other schools is not a particular demand on that school; it can meet almost everything from within its resources, so it is less likely to push what is happening elsewhere. We had to, because it was a question of survival. There will be different pressures and different requirements in schools all over Wales, depending on their size and the geography, such as where the local college is—whether it is next door or in the next valley. So, all sorts of pressures come in there. Again, we work closely with Careers Wales.

[128] **Aled Roberts:** It sounds, therefore, as though the duty to collaborate or to share information is stronger in those situations in which it has to happen due to economics, rather than the Measure encouraging it.

[129] **Mr O'Marah:** I am certainly not saying that the schools do not share the information. There is sharing where things happen for the benefit of youngsters. Where courses are only available outside, that information is shared, because you want to keep the student. We do it because we want to keep the students, and the only way to do that is by offering them the range of courses that we can offer within our collaborative set-up; otherwise, they would go.

[130] **Keith Davies:** Mae rhai myfyrwyr eisiau astudio pob pwnc drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. Sut y gallwch sicrhau bod y dewis o 30 o bynciau ar gael i'r bobl ifanc hyn? A oes gwahaniaeth rhwng ysgolion? Mae gennyh ysgolion dwy ffrwd yn y gogledd, **Keith Davies:** Some students want to study every subject through the medium of Welsh. How can you ensure that the choice of 30 subjects is available to these young people? Is there a difference between schools? You have dual-stream schools in north Wales,

efallai mwy nag yn y de.

perhaps more so than in south Wales.

[131] **Mr O'Marah:** In relation to your reference to north Wales, that will vary between north-west Wales and north-east Wales. I suspect that it is not an issue in north-west Wales, where English-medium schools are in the minority. With Coleg Menai, I suspect that the provision is pretty much even. It is different in north-east Wales, where the Welsh-medium schools have their own network and collaborate with each other in the production of course materials, the design of courses and so on. Morgan Llwyd and Maes Garmon work fairly closely together and occasionally with Ysgol Glan Clwyd. From conversations that I have had, I would guess that in the more anglicised areas, even though there is compliance with the Measure, the choice is more restricted, because my experience is that FE is less likely to have the full range of expertise in Welsh than in English. The size of Welsh-medium schools in north Wales is such that they will not be able to offer the full range of courses on their own. They are complying with the Measure and they work together. We are a border county, where an interesting reversal happens: some students opt to go the other side of the border, because their parents do not want them to do Welsh.

[132] **Keith Davies:** Yr oeddwn yn **Keith Davies:** I was also thinking of schools meddwl hefyd am ysgol fel yr un yn Llanfair Caereinion such as the one in Llanfair Caereinion.

[133] **Mr Pattrick:** I am not sure whether the whole Measure can be met through Welsh-medium further education, but I know that tremendous efforts have been made in Powys to make more courses available in Welsh. That has caused some concern in parts of Powys, more from the English-speaking students, because of the way that it has tended to be organised. However, the availability of courses through the medium of Welsh, as planned—it is early days yet again—will be greater. In the south of the county, that will continue as of now. They usually go over the border to institutions in Neath Port Talbot, which, although they are tertiary, offer A-levels and so on in the Welsh-medium school—in English as well as in Welsh.

[134] **Suzy Davies:** For English and Welsh-language courses, how effective and important has digital learning been in helping to implement the Measure? Is there some enthusiasm for developing this further?

[135] **Christine Chapman:** We are talking about digital learning not just for teaching, but for collaboration purposes as well.

[136] **Mr Pattrick:** You must be careful with this issue. We have had some experience of distance learning through digital learning, and it is all right as a back-up, but it is no good just as a method of teaching. You need someone at both ends to actually do the teaching. It is sometimes successful, but, at other times, as with many of these electronic things, it does not work very well. So, it can be a help in relation to some subjects as a back-up, but it is not very good for other more practical subjects.

[137] **Suzy Davies:** Can you give examples of subjects where it might work, even if it is as part of the support?

[138] **Mr Pattrick:** For psychology, for instance, you need someone at the end to support the student and to be a back-up.

[139] **Suzy Davies:** Is that true for 14 to 16-year-olds and 16 to 18-year-olds, or do you see a difference in the level of supervision needed?

[140] **Mr Pattrick:** The only experience that I have is with those who are 16 plus, rather

than 14 to 16-year-olds. Although, in this day and age, it should be okay for 14 to 16-year-olds, because they are probably better at those types of things than most adults. However, the support might need to be greater for the younger age group.

[141] **Mr O'Marah:** I know that Cynnal uses it quite a bit in Gwynedd, from a Llangefni base, I think. We tend to use digital learning more as a back-up for teaching—on-line access to homework, the on-line submission of written work, on-line marking and some tutorials—but not as a classroom teaching mode.

[142] **Suzy Davies:** Do schools and possibly colleges work together via video-link for a small cohort of pupils, say for modern foreign languages or Welsh as a second language, or even for a Welsh-medium course that may be aimed at a small group?

[143] **Mr O'Marah:** I do not have the evidence from across Wales to give you an answer on that.

[144] **Christine Chapman:** I mention again that we spoke to Jane about this, and she is happy for us to write to ask for further information. So, we appreciate and take up that offer.

[145] I will now end this session, because we need to move on. I thank both of you for attending this morning. We will send you a transcript of the meeting, so that you can check the accuracy of the Record. Thank you very much for attending today.

[146] The committee will now take a short break. The next witnesses are here, so perhaps we could have a 10-minute break and come back at 10.25 a.m. Thank you.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.14 a.m. a 10.23 a.m.
The meeting was adjourned between 10.14 a.m. and 10.23. a.m.*

Gweithredu Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2009: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence Session

[147] **Christine Chapman:** We will now receive evidence from CollegesWales—ColegauCymru. I welcome you all here today. We have with us John Graystone, chief executive of ColegauCymru; Mark Jones, principal of Bridgend College and senior vice-chair of ColegauCymru; and Ian Dickson, vice principal with responsibility for curriculum, planning and quality for Deeside College. We have received your paper, and Members will have read it. If you are content to do so, we will move straight to questions. I see that you are.

[148] I begin with a broad question. What effect do you think that the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 is having on further education colleges in Wales?

[149] **Mr Jones:** It is having a very positive effect. We are seeing a lot more collaboration than in previous years. Students are unquestionably getting a wider choice of subjects. In many cases, the Measure is opening up the options available to students. We are seeing students progressing as a result. It is positive for a range of reasons. It is still a little early to draw conclusions, as the Measure has been implemented for relatively few years. We need to see it being rolled out, but the indications across the sector at this stage are very positive.

[150] **Christine Chapman:** May I just ask about possible duplication and poor-quality vocational courses? Is the provision consistent? Are the good parts of the Measure being consistently applied across Wales, or are there issues around duplication or poor-quality

vocational courses, as we have heard some evidence regarding that?

[151] **Mr Jones:** I think that it is inconsistent, to be fair. To get the Measure working right, it has to be of the highest quality. In areas such as Bridgend, any new provision has to be agreed by a partnership group of all the headteachers and me. Any weaker provision is taken out early, at that stage. It does not mean to say that it does not happen, but it is very small in some areas. It is very difficult for schools in some cases, as they may have smaller class sizes, to look to put on some provision. However, there is a willingness to ensure that the Measure is not only successful, but that the quality is also the highest that it can possibly be. So, I think that the poor-quality provision is reducing in the case of Bridgend, but I do not know what the situation is in Deeside.

[152] **Mr Dickson:** Where there is genuine collaboration between partners, the quality of that provision is monitored very closely to see whether it is good. The issues tend to occur where activities are put on outside the network structure, where there is perhaps an individual provider who puts on some provision without consultation or collaboration. However, those situations are, thankfully, relatively rare, certainly in my areas.

[153] **Jocelyn Davies:** You will probably know that we have received evidence that some courses are being offered just because they know that they will be refused so that they can tick the box that they have offered enough courses. That would probably happen if there was a school, for example, offering the whole range knowing that it would not have to provide it. However, you are saying that collaboration weeds out the weak courses being offered because there is a check and balance against that practice.

[154] **Mr Jones:** Where collaboration exists, that quality is taken into account. You have those problems when it goes around the side.

[155] **Mr Graystone:** One of the issues is about the status of vocational qualification, which will take a long time to change; the Measure cannot do it on its own. There is still a view that the academic route is the one that young people should pursue, and if they are not quite so able, they go down the vocational route, which we feel is an inappropriate way of doing it. A recent survey of young people at the age of 15, covering the whole of the UK, showed that 63 per cent recognised A-levels, but only 7 per cent knew what an apprenticeship was, for example. So, we have a long way to go to bring vocational qualifications up to the same status, be that through parents, teachers or employers.

[156] **Keith Davies:** Regarding work-based learning, we received evidence about a fortnight ago from the National Training Federation for Wales, and its representatives were complaining that work-based learning pathways were not included in the Measure until recently. Do you have any comments on that?

[157] **Mr Jones:** Certainly, in Bridgend, there is a partnership steering group that has met for the last two years on a half-day basis. It involves all the headteachers, me and work-based learning providers meeting around the table. So, it differs in different areas. Due to the fact that some of the work-based learning provider companies are very small and some are big, you cannot put them all around the table. So, there are sometimes issues about that, but the intention is to bring in work-based learning providers. I can think of a number of schools that would link in directly with work-based learning companies on a range of pathways. So, like most of education provision, it is inconsistent, but I am sure that there are examples of good practice.

[158] **Mr Dickson:** We certainly have examples in all three of the areas that Deeside College operates across, in Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham, where there are work-based learning representatives as well as college representatives on the 14-19 networks.

[159] **Jenny Rathbone:** Do you think that schools and colleges are listening to businesses? It is crucial that we are training people to do jobs that exist in that area, or elsewhere, if they are the types of jobs that would pay sufficiently to enable people to move. We are including businesses, but are we listening to them? Some businesses are saying that some of the vocational learning provision is not working towards skills that would be useful to them, and that there is still a huge gap in employability.

10.30 a.m.

[160] **Mr Jones:** I think that it is our biggest challenge. If you take the example of the most successful colleges, individual schools or faculties within those colleges will have employer liaison committees, and they will bring employers in. Again, it will be representatives of the employers. You cannot bring all the representatives in. In my college, eight schools all have an active employer liaison committee, with industry representatives coming in to advise on basic things. For example, with a normal BTEC, you have some choice of modules, and employers sitting around the table can suggest that students choose certain modules as opposed to others, and the curriculum can move as well. I think that is happening now. The whole issue around essential skills is still one of the biggest issues. That is what we are hearing from employers: it is literacy and numeracy that they are demanding. Again, we have the opportunity to fill that in. It is an ongoing challenge. We have not cracked it across Wales, but I think that colleges—I can only answer for colleges—take industry extremely seriously. We see our role as ensuring that the youngsters of today are going out with the relevant skills to get into work, and we are sharing best practice across the colleges to ensure that we do that as much as possible. However, we know that we are not there yet.

[161] **Jocelyn Davies:** If an awful lot of effort is going into this, why does industry keep saying that we do not have young people who can apply these skills? It does not say that they do not have the skills, but that they cannot apply them to a working environment. That is what we are hearing. It is not that they cannot read or write. They are not illiterate and innumerate, but the skills they have are not applicable to what they need to do in the workplace.

[162] **Mr Jones:** Deeside has huge links with Airbus and Bridgend College with Tata and Ford. We are working closely with those industries to ensure that students have those skills. We are getting students coming through on apprenticeship programmes who are progressing on to work. If there are individual employers with those questions, my request is that they have that discussion with local colleges so that we can understand exactly what their problems or concerns are. There are many ways in which we can broker those links. The problem is that there is such a wide range of employers, from small and medium-sized enterprises through to the bigger companies, and it is a matter of understanding exactly what the issues are so that we can tailor the provision to meet those needs. That is what we are trying to do.

[163] **Christine Chapman:** There is an issue with soft skills, really. They seem to be talking about attitude and communication. That seems to be coming up a lot.

[164] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes, and form-filling and so on. However, I wonder whether some of this is just a myth—it is an easy thing to say that the education system is not producing people with the correct skills when, in fact, there is some responsibility on the part of families and employers to ensure that people are oven-ready, if you like, in terms of being able to operate—

[165] **Simon Thomas:** But not stuffed, I hope. [*Laughter.*]

[166] **Jocelyn Davies:** No, not stuffed. They did not say that they were not able to read and

write, but just that they were not able to apply that in the situations that they found themselves in once they started work.

[167] **Mr Jones:** It is a bit of both, I think. There are some youngsters coming through the system who have those issues with regard to attendance—and maturity, I suppose—as well as communication. That is undoubtedly the case. We try to give them more than just their main skills programme. We provide a whole range of other provision built around that, some of it linked to the Welsh baccalaureate, to ensure that they have a wider range of skills. We do not see ourselves as just teaching to put them in a job. We talk about giving individuals a better experience. However, undoubtedly, there are some youngsters in that position, and probably more than there were 10 years ago and more than there were 20 years ago.

[168] **Julie Morgan:** I am interested in why you should say that. Why would you say it is the case that there are more young people in that position now than there were 10 years ago?

[169] **Mr Jones:** I do not know—I am not a sociologist at all. Youngsters have more choice these days and they want more things done for them. I can think of examples in my college. For example, we said to the students that we were providing a new common room and that we would like to work with them to design it as they wanted it, but the work always ends up coming back to the college to do. We try to engage the students as much as possible. We have a student council in the college, which we try to work with. However, students need a great deal more encouragement these days than they did perhaps 10 years ago. That is my feel for it. However, we just need to keep working with them and looking for different ways to engage with them as much as possible.

[170] **Jocelyn Davies:** Mark, have the youngsters changed or are you getting older?

[171] **Mr Jones:** Both. [*Laughter.*] I have an 11-year-old; I am getting worried about the next six or seven years.

[172] **Mr Graystone:** Kidding aside, you are talking about things that go wider than the Measure now, are you not? You are talking about education's relationship with business. For colleges, that is at the heart of what we do—links with industry, work experience, apprenticeships have always been there. In terms of the Measure, what we are looking to do is to raise the profile of vocational qualifications, and that is why we were keen on a minimum of five subjects out of the 30 being vocational. As a country—in Wales and the UK—we do not value that provision sufficiently, and that is part of the issue. We need to have continued dialogue with employers. That is exactly what we are not doing, but what we should be doing. Sometimes, when we do what employers ask us to do, they do not recruit those people—they recruit people with traditional GCSEs and A-levels. So, it is a relationship that we need to have. We have built up good relationships, and we keep learning all the time.

[173] **Christine Chapman:** Jenny, do you have any further questions?

[174] **Jenny Rathbone:** Just picking up on some of the issues that you have flagged up, how do you think any changes in the financing of 14-19 provision may impact on collaboration, either for better or worse? You mentioned a school that said that it could not afford to send people off to college, so it used a teacher.

[175] **Mr Jones:** If we think that the learning Measure is the right thing, then we have to make it work, and all the evidence that you have been given would suggest that there is a positive message. Therefore, if we take that as a message to us, then we have to make it work. For example, in Bridgend, we are looking at sustainability; if the 14-19 network grant disappears, then we have to fund it ourselves. We will have to put money into a pot, maybe pro rata, based on the number of pupils that are moving between sites. So, we have to make it

work. I do not think that the news is that bad. A year ago, we were worried about whether the grant would stay in place, and I think that it is a 12 or 12.5 per cent reduction next year and a 7.5 per cent reduction the year after. There is still some funding to allow us to do it, but if we are really serious about it, and I think that we should be, we have to put our hands in our pockets and make it work. We have to look at flexible methods such as moving staff rather than students. You were talking earlier about some of the students in Deeside perhaps getting on normal service buses in the morning rather than separate transport being provided. We have to look at all these different methods, and we can do that. If we are serious about making it work, then I think that we can.

[176] **Mr Graystone:** If I can come in there, I think that where they are coming from is that support begins with the Measure. Lots of issues have arisen as the Measure has been rolled out, but these are challenges to be overcome and tackled, not reasons for not doing it. You will raise a lot of questions about transport and so on; okay, we can debate that, but from where we are sitting, that is not a reason for withdrawing from it. Those are things that we need to overcome together and collectively.

[177] **Simon Thomas:** I was struck by an example that you gave in your paper, where you listed some of the positive and negative experiences of a college that said that it basically had to change its timetable for 3,000 students in order to accommodate half a dozen who had come from the sixth form, as it were. Clearly, there are financial implications as well as organisational ones to that. That was one example that you gave; is it a single example of the teething problems that you were referring to, or is it something that colleges are concerned about as the Measure is rolled out?

[178] **Mr Jones:** We are trying to be as flexible as we can, Simon. In Bridgend, we have option T, which stands for twilight, which is 4.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. four nights a week; options X and Y, which are Monday and Tuesday; options A and B, which are Monday morning, Tuesday morning; and so on. You can use different methods to achieve this. I do not think that timetabling changes the funding—the funding is driven by the number of hours. You just cut it in a different way. However, we are looking to be as flexible as we can. In Bridgend, all the schools now have common timetables. They did not have that before. It is the college that is the one outside that framework. We are looking to see how we can fit it in, and we do that through innovative approaches across the region.

[179] **Simon Thomas:** What about different institutions having fortnightly timetables and weekly timetables? What is your experience there?

[180] **Mr Jones:** That is a real challenge, but, again, it is not impossible.

[181] **Mr Dickson:** The previous witnesses mentioned schools and colleges, and that seems to be where it works most effectively. They agree on common elements of the timetables, because you do not need to integrate them fully—it may be that there is just a common block, say in years 10 and 11. Once people sit around the table and try to work through the challenges, they find that some of them are not as difficult as they perhaps think they are before they try to find some common ground.

[182] **Aled Roberts:** Yr ydym wedi derbyn tystiolaeth bod y system gyllido yn y gorfennol wedi annog cystadleuaeth rhwng ysgolion, a rhwng ysgolion a cholegau. Beth yw eich barn chi ar yr adolygiad o'r gyfundrefn gyllido mae'r Gweinidog wedi ei gyhoeddi?

Aled Roberts: We have received evidence that the funding system in the past encouraged competition between schools, and between schools and colleges. What are your views on the review of the funding system that the Minister has announced?

[183] **Mr Jones:** That is a fair comment. If you could get more students in, then you would get more funding to go with those students, so it did encourage competition, or does encourage competition at this stage. In future, that is clearly one element that has to be taken out. With regard to the funding methodology, there was a national funding and planning system, and although it funded, it did not do the planning. If you want to make things happen, then some of the funding has to be allocated to planning. If you want partnership working, then some of the money should be taken out and put in a partnership fund, with organisations working together to go for that. However, that was a big problem with the NPFS: it encouraged growth and competition. That was against all of the messages that you were giving us on a regular basis. So, we accept that concern and, hopefully, that will be addressed. It is certainly a point that we will mention in our feedback.

[184] **Mr Graystone:** Colleges and schools respond to the way in which they are funded. 'Funding methodology' sounds very technical, but people listen to that and then respond accordingly. The challenge is to come up with a funding system that will encourage partnership. That is what we will be looking to tackle in the longer term. If schools are funded on the basis of student numbers, then it is in their interest to hang on to those students, and it is in the interests of a college to recruit those students. So, there is natural competition. We want to work on that. We welcome the fact that the NPFS will be reviewed. We want to see whether we can provide more incentives to institutions to work in collaboration so that they do not lose out.

[185] **Simon Thomas:** Have you been given the timetable for that review process?

[186] **Mr Graystone:** It is due to be set up. I think that we will be written to shortly for nominations. We are looking at roughly a year.

[187] **Mr Jones:** Yes, for the feedback.

[188] **Keith Davies:** Ers mis Medi, yr ydym wedi symud tuag at gynnig 30 o gyrsiau, 20 y cant ohonynt yn gyrsiau galwedigaethol, i bobl ifanc dros 16 oed. A fydd hwn yn effeithio ar y cwricwlwm, naill ai mewn colegau neu ysgolion? A oes digon o ddewis yn barod? Bu'n rhaid gwneud newidiadau mawr o ran cyfnod allweddol 4. A fydd newidiadau mawr o ran addysg ôl-16, ynteu a fydd popeth yn mynd yn hwylus?

Keith Davies: Since September, we have moved towards offering 30 courses, 20 per cent of which are vocational courses, for young people over the age of 16. Will this affect the curriculum, either in colleges or schools? Is there already enough choice? Major changes had to be made in relation to key stage 4. Will there be major changes in post-16 education, or will everything be straightforward?

[189] **Mr Dickson:** In terms of Welsh-medium and bilingual provision, colleges and schools face some common challenges. Collaborative working has meant that we have been able to make inroads in both schools and colleges. In measuring that activity, one of the frustrations is that the extent of the colleges' contribution towards that activity and the expansion of those opportunities is not, perhaps, always captured. It is important to recognise that what is measured of the colleges' activity relates only to those students who are college students. Our contribution to the Welsh-medium and bilingual education agenda is broader than that. For example, we work with schools in years 10, 11, 12 and 13 to help them to deliver vocational programmes through the medium of Welsh or bilingually in the school setting. However, it is important to recognise that those learners would still be registered as school learners and that activity would be counted at the school level. It would not necessarily be reflected in our own statistics as activity that we were contributing towards, because there would be a risk of double counting. So, we have put those issues aside.

10.45 a.m.

[190] For us, in north-east Wales, the transformation agenda has also helped with this. For example, our merger with Coleg Llysfasi has significantly enhanced our Welsh-medium and bilingual capacity. Things such as the support for the Welsh sabbatical scheme have also increased capacity. For us, one challenge is recruiting Welsh-speaking staff across all the vocational areas, and the sabbatical scheme is helping in that regard. Some Welsh-speaking staff may not necessarily have the confidence to deliver through the medium of Welsh or bilingually. The support that we have had in the north from Bangor to develop the capacity locally has certainly ensured that the will is there in the colleges and schools, but there are some practical difficulties. We are making significant inroads; the trajectory is upward, albeit from, if I am being honest, a relatively low base in some areas.

[191] **Mr Jones:** We are doing it already in Bridgend; we are there. The issue is the future sustainability linked to the future unknown position of 14-19 grant. That is where the difficulties will come. It is surmountable. All those numbers are being met now, so I do not think that there will be any more significant changes.

[192] **Keith Davies:** Fel arfer, mae plant wedi dilyn cyrsiau galwedigaethol neu academiaidd. Gyda'r Mesur hwn, a oes mwy o gymysgedd yn digwydd? A oes pynciau galwedigaethol sy'n ategu pynciau academiaidd? A ydych yn gweld cymysgedd yn awr neu a ydyw'r un peth ag o'r blaen, sef dewis rhwng cyrsiau academiaidd—lefel A— a chysiau galwedigaethol? **Keith Davies:** Children have usually followed vocational or academic courses. With this Measure, is there more of a mix? Are there vocational subjects that complement academic subjects? Do you see more of a mix now, or is it the same as before, namely a choice between academic courses—A-levels—and vocational courses?

[193] **Mr Jones:** That is a really good question. The blend will get better. I can think of students, particularly in STEM subjects, who may want to study physics and chemistry, and maybe there is a link in terms of following a vocational option in engineering, for example. Some of those are working, but we can do more. It is a matter of blending it together, but we can do far more in some of those areas than we are doing now. Generally, it is working well, but we can make it even better moving forward by blending it in.

[194] **Mr Dickson:** There is quite a significant increase in the number of subsidiary diplomas, for example, that are offered as part of the post-16 matrix, and they are delivered through the medium of Welsh.

[195] **Jenny Rathbone:** In the conclusion of your evidence, you say that some young people are being given advice that is more akin to the needs of the institution than to the needs of the individual. Will you tell us how we can ensure that young people get impartial advice based on their skills, aptitude and interests, rather than biased advice?

[196] **Mr Jones:** It is very difficult. Some teachers and parents do not understand what vocational provision is. So, it is very difficult in that position to give independent advice and guidance. Sometimes, careers advisers can be a little away from it as well. Advice and guidance is very mixed, but there is no blame there; some people just do not understand what it is about. We need to be more open. We were talking before about the fact that we all go to schools, where we have desks and talk to students about engineering, construction and so on, but it needs to be far more than that. I cannot talk to students about engineering across a desk for 10 minutes. We need a more open approach so that all students are given a full picture of the all the options that are out there. That means that they will be given the best advice and guidance that meets their needs.

[197] My daughter is 11 years old; if she wants to be a doctor when she is 16, the advice

would be that she should study chemistry, physics and biology in school and then go on to university. However, she might want to be a chef, a civil engineer or a vet. So, the advice needs to be improved, and I think that it needs to be forced. Students should have mandatory, open advice and guidance. Work-based learning providers should be there to say what is on offer, and we then need people who can talk pupils through their individual needs. Generally, advice and guidance of that breadth is not being delivered across Wales. In some cases, it is not the correct advice and guidance. That happens because some people do not understand, and why would they if they have not been through a further education route? Why would they understand what a BTEC qualification is? That needs to be better.

[198] **Jenny Rathbone:** We know that the country needs more people skilled in the STEM subjects. Are we offering taster courses and taking people into workplaces so that they can get their hands dirty and understand how interesting it can be?

[199] **Mr Graystone:** This is where we come back to the funding methodology. To be a bit controversial, it is in the interest of schools to hang on to their students. Take GCSE results, for example. The results are given at the school, and there is a big song and dance and so on. Colleges that have offered places to young people aged 16 find that because the results are given in school, many young people stay on in school. They are told, 'You've done really well, and we have a lovely course for you. You don't need to go to the college; you can stay here'. Colleges have to be like airlines, in that they have to overbook. They have to take on 25 per cent more, knowing that 25 per cent are not going to turn up. It is very difficult to plan. We even have to purchase addresses because we cannot get access to young people. We have to pay companies for addresses so that we can send out our prospectus. There are issues with ensuring that the advice that young people get is in their interest, rather than in the interest of the institution.

[200] **Christine Chapman:** You mentioned purchasing addresses. How widespread is that? Does it happen in every area, or only in some?

[201] **Mr Dickson:** It does not happen in every area. For example, in one of the three counties that we work in, 12 of the schools have their own sixth forms, so distributing the college prospectus to all those learners is not likely to be feasible. You have probably heard evidence about the pressure to hold on to students. The only way in which we can ensure that learners get full information is by doing our best to try to provide that information to them directly. There are no guaranteed channels through which we have access to all year 11 students. That is a pressure.

[202] **Jenny Rathbone:** Surely, local education authorities have a duty to ensure that you do not have to pay to get access to students. The local education authority should be ensuring that each student has the full range of options placed in front of them.

[203] **Mr Graystone:** They have a responsibility under the Measure, but in practical terms, colleges cannot get access. Mark was talking about having a desk in schools; some colleges do not even have a desk. Local schools will not allow that, because it is not in the school's interest for young people to go to college, because the school loses numbers. The Webb report commented on the role of the advice service. That is an area that needs to be developed. There is a central Universities and Colleges Admissions Service system in relation to A-level results. I am not sure if that is something we need for FE. However, universities get A-level results three or four days before they come out, so the offers are ready and they can respond very quickly. When GCSE results come out, colleges have to wait and hope that the young people who have enrolled turn up. We do not know if they will, but we keep our fingers crossed. Planning courses is extremely difficult, because we do not have direct access to those young people.

[204] **Simon Thomas:** On the earlier point about exposing people to vocational training and workplace experience, are there difficulties with Welsh-language provision or difficulties in rural areas? I am trying to help my son to get workplace experience at the moment. I have noticed that, in a place like Aberystwyth, small and medium-sized enterprises and single companies run by one or two individuals find it difficult to constantly have people on work placements. They do not have the flexibility or the staff to deal with that. There is also a lack of range. If you want an engineering workplace experience in Aberystwyth, where would you go? There is a lack of range in rural areas. So, how are colleges dealing with the challenge of making this vocational choice a reality and not something that is just paid lip service?

[205] **Mr Jones:** I cannot comment on the rural areas, Simon. Generally, the work is split between teams; they are on the phone all day, every day, speaking to employers and helping them with health and safety checks, to take the responsibility off the employers. There are questionnaires for employers about whether they had a good time and questionnaires for the students, and it is about trying to match as much as you can. The truth is that the area of vocational experience is widening all the time, and some companies are not offering that. So, it is a full-time job, and I can imagine that it is even harder in rural areas. However, it is an area that we have teams working on, not just one person who has half an hour free. We have teams on the phone every day, nine-to-five, asking, 'Will you take this student?' That is great for us because that tries to build a relationship with the employers that we have talked about before. What I am trying to do is to get all our employers to know about the college. Sometimes, you can get in through a work placement and then you can start to build up that relationship and talk about other things as well. However, it is a full-time job and, in some areas, it will be more difficult.

[206] **Christine Chapman:** I think that Suzy has a question on this point. Is that right?

[207] **Suzy Davies:** It is as near as I can squeeze it into the subject. *[Laughter.]*

[208] **Christine Chapman:** I then have Aled and Keith, before we move on.

[209] **Suzy Davies:** Okay, I will ask the work-based learning question. Some of the evidence that this committee has received on the vocational strands that are being offered suggests that the business and administration strands are not being taken up to the same extent as other vocational areas. Is that your experience, and if so, do you have any ideas why that is happening? It may not be happening in your college, Mark, but happening more generally.

[210] **Mr Jones:** In Bridgend, we are talking about levels 2, 3 and 4, and we have had the biggest numbers for the last five or six years for level 4 in business and administration this year. I do not know what it is like in Deeside.

[211] **Mr Dickson:** You do find that some schools put on their own provision at level 2 in particular, so it is interesting from our point of view that that is the one area in which we have not recently recruited at levels 1 and 2; we have tended to recruit at level 3, and that seems to indicate that quite a lot of the activity is already taking place within schools.

[212] **Aled Roberts:** Yr wyf am fynd yn ôl at ddarparu gwybodaeth. Dywedodd Gyrfaedd Cymru yr wythnos diwethaf fod y wybodaeth i gyd yn cael ei darparu gan ambell rwydwaith yn hytrach na chan yr ysgolion a'r colegau. A oes gennych dystiolaeth am faint o'r rheini yng Nghymru sydd yn gwneud hynny ar y cyd, sef bod un prospectws yn cael ei baratoi ar gyfer y **Aled Roberts:** I would like to return to the provision of information. Careers Wales told us last week that all the information is provided by some networks rather than by the schools and colleges. Do you have any evidence about how many of them in Wales do so collaboratively, namely that one prospectus is prepared for the whole network? From what you have said this

rhwydwaith? O'r hyn a ddywedoch chi'r bore morning, it sounds to me as if that is the
yma, mae'n swnio fel bod hynny'n eithriad exception rather than the rule.
yn hytrach nag yn sefyllfa gyffredinol.

[213] **Mr Jones:** Bridgend has separate prospectuses for each school, but with a common theme; they all look the same and there is an element in there that is common and consistent across all the prospectuses, but they are themed to the individual school, which is fine. That is what we have in Bridgend, but there is an element of the prospectus that is consistent across the board, which gives the full range of provision that is on offer through all the various ranges of options. That is what we have in Bridgend.

[214] **Christine Chapman:** John, is that consistent across Wales?

[215] **Mr Graystone:** There are examples of good practice, and we would want such examples. Carmarthenshire has a very integrated approach, and there are beacons that we want to aspire to. However, those are still exceptions; what we would like is for that to be the rule. If you would like, we could do a survey to find out what the position is, but the perception is that those are things that we aspire to.

[216] **Christine Chapman:** When you have done that, could you write to us?

[217] **Mr Graystone:** Yes, of course.

[218] **Christine Chapman:** We will take the final point from Jenny, because Keith's question has been answered.

[219] **Jenny Rathbone:** I want to ask about more vulnerable learners and people who are going to want to study level 1 courses. Have they been squeezed out by the level 2 provision? How well are colleges able to provide for them?

[220] **Mr Dickson:** The main focus of the Measure clearly is level 2, and that means that there are some issues below that level. It does not mean to say that things are not happening; there are things happening at that level before the 14-19 networks came along, let alone the Measure. There are some aspects of the Measure's provision whereby pupils are allowed to access level 1 provision—it is not exclusively level 2; there are certain occupational areas in which it is acceptable to do level 1, but the focus is on level 2. I do not think that that has squeezed out activity at level 1, but nor has it expanded it at the same rate as level 2 provision.

11.00 a.m.

[221] **Mr Jones:** Same here. I do not think that it has affected it at all. We always have a certain number of students on those courses, and those courses are still being offered. In fact, it is another area of growth, so I do not think that the Measure has impacted on that at all.

[222] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay; so it is not a cause of concern, in your experience.

[223] **Keith Davies:** I think that it is today that the Minister is to make a statement on the banding of schools.

[224] **Mr Graystone:** It is tomorrow.

[225] **Keith Davies:** Is it? There we are—I was not sure whether it was due today or tomorrow. As part of that, part of the Measure is the level 2 threshold, which will include science, mathematics, English and Welsh. Therefore, the question that Jenny was asking was

about the danger that level 1 courses will be squeezed out, because you need to reach the level 2 threshold that will affect your banding.

[226] **Jenny Rathbone:** The pupils will not care, though.

[227] **Keith Davies:** No, but the schools may not offer the level 1 courses.

[228] **Mr Jones:** We have seen growth in level 1 and level 2 this year, which perhaps suggests that we are getting more level 1 and level 2 students than in the past. I would not say that that was the sole reason for it, as there are probably a lot of different reasons, but certainly, more level 1 and level 2 provision is being demanded this year than at any time before.

[229] **Julie Morgan:** I would like to ask about the issues that arise with 14 to 16-year-olds being in FE colleges. What are those issues, and how are they being tackled?

[230] **Mr Jones:** We have always had 14 to 16-year-olds—

[231] **Julie Morgan:** There will now be more.

[232] **Mr Jones:** Yes. There are concerns there, but I do not think that it is anything that cannot be managed. We have big, open common rooms and big, open refectories, and all the students are there together in that environment. However, we are keen to monitor that on a regular basis—managers will draw up rotas and so on for all those areas, to ensure that no issues exist. I find that most of the students love that more mature kind of experience. We have a coffee bar, and they are piled up there every day, getting that experience. If you took your eye off the ball, it could be a concern, but in reality, I do not think that it is a concern.

[233] **Julie Morgan:** What if any of them display signs of problem behaviour; do you deal with it, or is it referred back to the school?

[234] **Mr Jones:** It is done jointly.

[235] **Julie Morgan:** How does that work?

[236] **Mr Jones:** We would register that with the school; there are procedures built into all of the collaboration working. The issue would be discussed with the school, and we would go through the procedures to ensure that it is filtered back. Essentially, if it is a school pupil, the school, through the tutorial system, would make the decision, but with advice and guidance from us.

[237] **Julie Morgan:** Are there any Criminal Records Bureau issues with under-16s in the college?

[238] **Mr Jones:** Our students are not CRB checked. Obviously, all the staff are CRB checked. Students in some vocational areas are CRB checked—in health, social care and the like. In that big, open environment, you do have some students who are CRB checked, and you have some who are not, but that has always been the situation. We just make sure that staff are there to monitor it.

[239] **Christine Chapman:** Some schools and teachers unions, in evidence to us, have said that this is an issue. Some do not feel confident that 14-year-olds going into FE colleges will have the same level of care, because of the different cultures. Could we have your view on that?

[240] **Mr Jones:** We probably do not mollycoddle them as much as some teachers would want. They are put in a mature environment; we have very few problems and we have very positive student surveys. The response from students is that they like it—they like experiencing a school environment and a college environment as well. I have heard concerns being raised, but the number of issues is very small, and they are like our normal issues. We will always have one or two students who behave inappropriately and need to be dealt with. If it is a 14-year-old rather than a 16-year-old who is misbehaving, they will be dealt with in the same way. I do not see it as an issue, but we will not take our eyes off it either, because we are aware of the concerns.

[241] **Simon Thomas:** What evidence is there that lecturers are supported to deal with younger pupils, particularly considering the fact that is not part of the qualification for lecturers at the moment? What sort of feedback do you get on that?

[242] **Mr Graystone:** That is a valid point. We are currently in discussion with the trade unions about a common contract. We are looking for 30 hours of continuing professional development every year to be part of that contract. The teaching of 14 to 16-year-olds will be a key feature of that. Broadening the issue out, we have a system of standards for teachers, but we do not have a qualifications framework in Wales yet; we are pushing the Welsh Government on that issue. Perhaps the work of this committee will reinforce that point and provide evidence to support it. We feel that the qualifications framework needs to reflect all of the changes that are taking place, one of which is the teaching of 14 to 16-year-olds.

[243] **Mr Jones:** These days, further education has such a wide remit, all the way up to higher education. Some staff members are more confident in dealing with HE students, some are more comfortable dealing with level 3 or level 2 students, and some are already doing work with prisoners or young offenders and are more experienced in that area. It depends on the individual. We need a qualification that supports them.

[244] **Simon Thomas:** Are all staff members engaged in teaching now qualified in FE, including people coming in from outside on occasion?

[245] **Mr Jones:** The vast majority are qualified. That is the incentive: they are paid more if they are qualified. There are a few gaps with part-time staff. Many staff members in professional areas like law or accountancy will be coming in and doing the postgraduate certificate of education training at the same time as they are picking up a few hours of teaching work. They will be developing their options. However, I think that the vast majority of people are qualified.

[246] **Mr Graystone:** You might get the odd solicitor who comes in to give a lecture once a year and is not qualified. However, by and large—

[247] **Simon Thomas:** I appreciate that. I was thinking more about occasions in the past where people have been coming in from business, for example, to fill in. Those people might not necessarily have held teaching qualifications.

[248] **Mr Jones:** I think that the number of people doing that is very small. With the help of universities, colleges are running PGCE courses and putting those staff members on those courses. It is in their interest and in our interest.

[249] **Simon Thomas:** It is now a question of ensuring that that PGCE course reflects the reality of what is happening, post Measure.

[250] **Mr Graystone:** Yes; we need to get a qualifications framework in place.

[251] **Mr Jones:** The situation varies depending on whether or not some staff members have experience in one area, such as HE. If you ask them to deal with 14-year-olds, there will be an element of nervousness. We will then try to timetable relevant staff members who are comfortable and confident in teaching that age group. Generally speaking, that works, although there are always one or two cases where there will be an issue.

[252] **Jocelyn Davies:** Coming back to what Julie Morgan said about CRB checks, some of your students are going to be much older, and you will have mature students mingling with 14-year-olds. Sometimes, we hear that 16-year-olds are not old enough to be going into a college environment. I can, therefore, see why there would be concerns about 14-year-olds doing so. However, would they, perhaps, be self-selecting? Would those who would feel uncomfortable in that environment probably not choose options that would take them to college?

[253] **Mr Jones:** You are right. In student services, we get a really positive response on that issue. However, I am sure that some students are self-selecting.

[254] **Lynne Neagle:** Do you have any evidence that wider choice and increased emphasis on vocational training are improving staying-on rates?

[255] **Mr Jones:** It is too early to say. The anecdotal evidence is that they are having that effect. However, you could say that the current recession may be having the same effect. We need to allow this to run its course.

[256] **Mr Graystone:** The information from Estyn seems to show an increase in staying-on rates, but it is hard to know whether that is as a result of the Measure or whether it would have happened anyway. Retention, achievement and successful completion of courses have been steadily increasing over a number of years. So, it is difficult to disentangle the Measure, but we would say that it helps—although it is difficult to give a clear answer regarding to what extent.

[257] **Mr Dickson:** It has raised the profile of vocational education. It is interesting that, in our statistics, there is a clear trend that the full-time vocational numbers are increasing more rapidly than the numbers for general education—the A-level provision.

[258] **Aled Roberts:** Hoffwn ddychwelyd at ddarpariaeth cyfrwng Cymraeg. Yr ydych wedi delio â llawer o'r materion ynglŷn â recriwtio staff a'r ffaith nad yw rhai aelodau staff yn hyderus i ddysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, hyd yn oed os ydynt yn Gymry Cymraeg. Cafwyd tystiolaeth gan Undeb Prifysgol a Choleg yn sôn am ddatblygiad y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol o fewn addysg uwch, ac mai un o'r atebion i'r broblem hon, efallai, oedd creu coleg Cymraeg cenedlaethol ar gyfer addysg bellach a hefyd ar gyfer y ddarpariaeth addysg 14-19. Beth yw eich barn chi ar hynny?

Aled Roberts: I want to go back to Welsh-medium provision. You have dealt with a lot of the issues regarding the recruitment of staff and the fact that some members of staff are not confident to teach through the medium of Welsh, even if they are Welsh speakers. We received evidence from the University and College Union that mentioned the development of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol within higher education, and that one of the possible solutions for this problem was the creation of a national Welsh-language college in further education and also for the provision of 14-19 education. What is your opinion on that?

[259] **Mr Jones:** It is too early to say. The challenge for further education is to deliver more through the medium of Welsh—we heard the figures that Simon quoted earlier—but my take on it is that colleges are making good improvements in doing that. However, we must be careful with the data. We have a lot of students coming in from Welsh schools, of which we

have two—one in Bridgend and one on the outskirts—as well as tutors going out to deliver provision through the medium of Welsh in those schools, but that is not included in the statistics. Of the students in Bridgend, 10 per cent are Welsh speakers: we have 3,000 full-time students, 200 of whom are Welsh speakers. So, if they were in 10 groups of 20, that would be fine—I could provide a Welsh-speaking tutor for them—but they are not; there are, say, two Welsh speakers in one class and one, four, five or none in others. So, we are looking at a mixed model. In some cases, we are delivering modules through the medium of Welsh and, in others, students receive individual one-to-one support through the medium of Welsh.

[260] So, it is a different model, but my feeling is that, generally across the sector, there is improvement, with tutors going on placements and sabbaticals and coming back with experience. For instance, I have a motor vehicle lecturer this year who is teaching the students at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd in Maesteg and is very nervous about it. He is currently doing four or five hours a week and is getting a lot of support, but, next year, he will be able to do a bit more. What we were trying to do across the area is to raise it, bit by bit.

[261] We can do some work in partnership with other colleges, and perhaps make these tutors peripatetic so that they can move between colleges as well. We have come on in leaps and bounds over the last couple of years, and I really think that we can finish the job—and that is in a relatively English-speaking part of south-east Wales. We know that that is one of our challenges, and it is a big one, as is the issue of employers, but we are dealing with it, just like we did with the equality agenda, which was a big issue for further education seven or eight years ago. We have delivered on that, so we can deliver on these as well.

[262] **Mr Graystone:** To have a coleg Cymraeg cenedlaethol for FE is probably not appropriate; whereas HE is national, our students are mainly local, so having that sort of virtual institution would require us to give close consideration to exactly what it would do and whether it would add value.

[263] Welsh-language provision is a huge priority area for ColegauCymru. We have appointed a director of bilingualism and we are working closely with colleges on action plans to look to improve the delivery of Welsh-language provision. We feel that a lot of work needs to be done on this, and our long-term aim is to embed it in our culture, so that, at the age of 16, it is a valid choice, rather than most courses being offered through the medium of English.

[264] There is a data issue, which Simon has quoted in previous proceedings. Many of the things that we deliver are not captured, and one thing that we would like the committee to recommend is for there to be a more intelligent collection of data, so that we can know exactly how much Welsh, as well as bilingual, delivery is taking place in colleges. I can collect those data by asking every individual college, but they are not collected nationally, so those data are not available. However, we do see that as the big challenge. It is a clear part of our strategy at the moment.

11.15 a.m.

[265] **Simon Thomas:** Nid oes dwywaith bod gwelliant wedi bod yn y sector. Mae'n llawer mwy ymwybodol o hyn yn awr. O ystyried yr holl bethau sy'n effeithio ar ddewisiadau pobl ifanc, gan gynnwys eu rhieni a'u hysgolion yn ogystal ag agweddau'r darlithwyr a'r bobl sy'n dysgu yn y colegau, mae'n bwysig nid yn unig bod dewis Cymraeg, ond bod cefnogaeth i ddewis cyrsiau Cymraeg. Mae'n bwysig bod

Simon Thomas: There is no doubt that there has been improvement in the sector. It is much more aware of this now. Considering everything that affects the choices that young people make, including their parents and schools as well as the attitude of lecturers and those who teach in colleges, it is important that not only is a Welsh-medium option available, but there is support for choosing Welsh-medium courses. It is important that

diwylliant mewn colegau sy'n gefnogol i bobl sy'n dewis opsiwn sydd yn opsiwn lleiafrifol ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr, er enghraifft. Beth ydych yn ei wneud mewn colegau i sicrhau bod eu hethos yn gefnogol i'r Gymraeg, yn ogystal â darparu cyrsiau Cymraeg?

there is a culture within colleges that is supportive of people who choose an option that is a minority option in Bridgend, for example. What are you doing in colleges to ensure that their ethos is supportive of the Welsh language, as well as providing Welsh-medium courses?

[266] **Mr Graystone:** The strategy adopted for ColegauCymru fits into the Welsh Government's strategy. There are three levels: level 1 is that every college should have a Welsh ethos, so that when you visit a college, you know that it is a Welsh college and not a college from over the border; level 2 is that every college should teach Welsh-language customer relations skills. If you are studying a vocational course in plumbing, say, you may not need to know all the technical terms in Welsh, but you would need to be able to deal with Welsh-speaking customers; level 3 is when everything is done through the medium of Welsh. We are looking at those three levels. Getting every college up to level 3 will be a huge task, but that is our aspiration. A number of colleges have also appointed bilingual champions to drive up the Welsh provision in those areas. We are working with every college to come up with targets and agree action plans. We will be going back to monitor those colleges against those targets over time. We are not there yet, but it is a clear target for us. We need to get that ethos and that culture across.

[267] **Simon Thomas:** When you have the new FE governance structure, will you look at having someone on the board with responsibility for ensuring that those levels are met in the college? Is that something that you will be looking at?

[268] **Mr Graystone:** It will be up to every college, but we would hope—. Every college has signed up to the strategy and they are all committed to it. We would expect that, as a major strategic development, every governing body would see that as a responsibility. If they had a governor responsible for that, it would be excellent and we would certainly encourage that.

[269] **Christine Chapman:** We have around five minutes left. We have a couple of specific questions, and I will hand over to Suzy for questions on digital learning. We have covered some of the transport issues.

[270] **Suzy Davies:** As you will know, a review of digital classroom teaching is coming up, and is to be done a task and finish group. In terms of college provision, has there been an increase in digital learning in colleges as a direct result of the obligation to collaborate?

[271] **Mr Graystone:** I cannot give a definitive answer to that, but I know that there is a review of digital teaching. We have a representative on that group, which is looking at the extent of it. Anecdotally, I would say that it is developing. Colleges are embracing new technology. I find it difficult to give an answer on the extent to which it has revolutionised teaching. We could come back to you on that after asking our colleges. We have one or two examples that we could provide, but as to whether the whole sector has embraced it at this stage, all I can say is that the new technology is there. Digital teaching is a certain aspect of that, though, and it is not quite the same, so we would need to look into that for you.

[272] **Suzy Davies:** We have received evidence that certain vocational courses would be impossible to deliver digitally—construction, for example. However, there are other, more traditional options that perhaps could be delivered digitally when you are working with schools. I am just wondering whether that is happening. I do not need a long spiel on it.

[273] **Mr Jones:** It is happening; in some of the more rural areas, such as Meirion Dwyfor

and Powys, that kind of work is being done. A lot of colleges are also doing it with employers. They are putting together courses using IT that can then be rolled out and made available or sold to employers as well. So, lots of colleges are looking at that kind of work as well. For mainstream vocational courses in settings such as south-east Wales, there are smaller numbers, but, in terms of rural areas, I can think of several examples in Powys and Meirion Dwyfor where I know that it is happening.

[274] **Suzy Davies:** Excellent; thank you.

[275] **Christine Chapman:** Is it about helping the collaboration agenda, or is it just an add-on to good teaching? In the early days, it was discussed as a real solution to collaboration, but I wonder what the realities are.

[276] **Mr Dickson:** The realities are that the biggest successes have been in blended approaches, so the use of things such as virtual learning environments have been embedded within the programmes to enhance the quality of delivery. There has been a lot more success on that than there has been on a purely digital alternative curriculum. That seems to be the message that is coming back from across the sector.

[277] **Christine Chapman:** Aled, did you want to come in? I see that you did not. We have a final question from Jenny.

[278] **Jenny Rathbone:** How often have college principals had to use their powers under the Measure to exclude pupils from a course of study, and what were the reasons?

[279] **Mr Jones:** Are you talking about the exclusion of 14 to 16-year-old students under the Measure, or generally?

[280] **Jenny Rathbone:** Under the Measure.

[281] **Mr Jones:** This year, my deputy and I have suspended two students on a permanent basis. One can reapply. Neither of them were students on transformation courses. A number of students are going through disciplinary action, but I think that they are all college students. However, these are not big numbers. There is nothing different about this year to previous years. So, I have not had to use those powers at all.

[282] **Keith Davies:** What about small groups, which I think Jocelyn mentioned earlier, and when they become non-viable? That reduces youngsters' entitlement, does it not?

[283] **Mr Jones:** Yes, that is where you use the 14-19 grant innovatively. So, we have some courses with what I would suggest are smaller numbers than we would generally have, of seven or eight. In some cases, we have agreed with the network that some of the money can be used to shore that up for some 12 months to give it a try. The difficulty is the time. Sometimes, pupils make their minds up late in the day—we talked about that earlier—so you do not see the numbers coming through. There is a big movement in the first couple of weeks. You do not see the class settle down until week three or four. Sometimes, that is too late to shut down a course, because some of the other children have already made up their mind and chosen all their other options. So, we sometimes use the 14-19 grant as almost a contingency pot, which we keep back to shore up those numbers, but we allow a year to sort it out. There is a huge issue here about making decisions earlier, so that you can plan more effectively, but that is an ongoing issue.

[284] **Keith Davies:** I have to follow that up now, because you said that you would give it a year, but what if it is a two-year course?

[285] **Mr Jones:** We would support a two-year course.

[286] **Aled Roberts:** We were specifically looking for examples of use of the power under the Measure to remove a student's entitlement if either there was a health and safety risk to that student in continuing with the course or there would be a disproportionate expenditure to maintain that pupil's course of study. We were interested to know whether principals or headteachers had used that power under the Measure to remove an entitlement.

[287] **Mr Jones:** No, not in Bridgend. We have about three or four courses where I would suggest that the numbers are too small. All of those are running this year, and we are looking to ensure that we are not in that position next year. The truth is that, next year, we will probably have another three or four different courses in that position. The big difficulty that we have is that the numbers are not clear until about week four. Therefore, if you pull a course, it will disadvantage lots of other pupils from lots of other schools. So, we try to keep it running and then look at how we can improve it the following year. Generally, we are able to do that.

[288] **Mr Dickson:** Standard risk assessment procedures are in place across the colleges, so if, for example, somebody may be going into a risky environment, such as an engineering workshop, there is a standard risk assessment. If there was a disproportionate amount of risk, there would be dialogue to route people towards a less risky environment.

[289] **Aled Roberts:** If the budget gets tighter—you referred to the 12 per cent and the 7.5 per cent reductions—will the threshold with regard to the application of that risk assessment be likely to change?

[290] **Mr Dickson:** No, it is based on health and safety issues, not financial issues.

[291] **Mr Jones:** The class size may increase, but not the health and safety threshold.

[292] **Christine Chapman:** We possibly need to monitor that. I know that when the Measure was being debated, much earlier on, that was a particular issue that Members raised, but we can monitor that. I would like to draw the session to a close, so I thank Ian, Mark and John for attending this morning. It has been interesting evidence, and we have had a good discussion. We will send you the transcript of the meeting so that you can check it for factual accuracy. Thank you for attending and have a good Christmas.

11.26 a.m.

Cynnig Gweithdrefnol Procedural Motion

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

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(ix).

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

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11.26 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11.26 a.m.*

