OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 17 May 2017

Session 5

The Scottish Parliament
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EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
15th Meeting 2017, Session 5

CONVENER

*James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)
*Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP)
*Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
*Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
*Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
*Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)
*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
*Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Dr Rowena Arshad (University of Edinburgh)
Laurence Findlay (Moray Council)
Dr Liz Lakin (Learned Societies Group on Scottish STEM Education)
Jane Peckham (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers)
Dr Lesley Reid (University of Edinburgh)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Roz Thomson

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 17 May 2017

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Workforce Planning (Schools)

The Convener (James Dornan): Welcome to the 15th meeting in 2017 of the Education and Skills Committee. I remind everyone to turn their mobile phones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

The first item of business is the second evidence session in our inquiry into teacher workforce planning for Scotland's schools. Last week, the committee heard from a number of trainee teachers and qualified teachers. This week, we will consider the perspective of a teacher education university, an education authority in an area where there are teacher shortages and a teaching union, and we will consider the specific shortage of teachers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

I welcome Laurence Findlay, corporate director of education and social care at Moray Council; Dr Liz Lakin, senior lecturer in education at the learned societies group on Scottish STEM education; Jane Peckham, national official of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers; and Dr Lesley Reid, director of undergraduate studies, and Dr Rowena Arshad, head of Moray House school of education, from the University of Edinburgh.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the committee's request for views and for agreeing to give evidence. Next week, the committee will hear further evidence from unions and education authority and university representative bodies, so there is no expectation that today's witnesses will answer questions on behalf of all universities or all education authorities. That said, your organisations' perspectives will provide valuable context for our work.

As is standard, I will kick off with a general question on teacher training targets. What role do your organisations have in influencing the initial teacher education targets and what issues prevent some of those targets from being met?

Dr Rowena Arshad (University of Edinburgh): All teacher education institutions are part of the Scottish teacher workforce planning advisory group. We have conversations with the Government about targets at least two or three times a year. Generally, we have a discussion in December. The issue is not about participation but about the timing of when we get the agreed targets, which can be later than is desirable. Ideally, it would be good to get the targets in December, because we interview between January and March—we need the targets earlier.

Another route that is developing is teacher education partnerships, through which we work much more closely with our local authorities to identify local gaps and pressure points.

The Convener: Why do you think the targets should be presented earlier? I think you said it should happen in December.

Dr Arshad: It would be useful to know them earlier. We might be interviewing 20 excellent physics applicants—actually, let us not take physics as an example, because that is an area in which it is hard to recruit, and I suspect that if we got 20, we would get them all. Let us assume that there is a controlled number but we would like to get more. Given that we do not know the targets until February or March each year, we do not know whether we can offer extra places. That is the issue. If we overshoot the target, there is a penalty; and if we undershoot it, there is a penalty.

The Convener: Have you made representations about the timing?

Dr Arshad: Yes. It would assist us if we got the targets earlier.

The Convener: Thank you.

Dr Liz Lakin (Learned Societies Group on Scottish STEM Education): We would push for a strong and comprehensive evidence base for the targets. When the workforce plan is being put together, there needs to be a complete, reliable and accurate evidence base to draw on. We need the figures on vacancies and shortages in subjects across the board, not just in STEM subjects, so that the target figures mean something. The figures should be projected forward to show shortfalls, as per the Donaldson review.

Laurence Findlay (Moray Council): It is incumbent on us to work closely with our local teacher training institutes. If we are to meet local demand for teachers, we have to start identifying people locally who could become teachers in our area in order to build from the grass roots up. In Moray, we have a partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands, which has trained primary teachers for a number of years. Now, through on-going partnership working, it has expanded into training secondary teachers in critical subject areas such as home economics, physics and technological education, where we have struggled to recruit. We identify people locally who are willing to train as teachers and

then, provided that they pass their training, we guarantee them a post in Moray for their newly qualified year. That has to be the future. It is about developing local approaches to teacher training.

The Convener: I would like to ask a number of questions about that, but I will leave it for my colleagues. I think that Tavish Scott wants to come in quickly.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): Sorry, convener—I do not mean to interrupt at all. Mr Findlay, is it your assessment that the national workforce planning regime, for want of a better word, needs to be more localised? I presume that the example that you gave involves the northern alliance, or is it Moray Council specifically? It would be fascinating if we could have your take on that and then have the Moray House take.

Laurence Findlay: Just now, we are doing it from a Moray perspective, but I know that my colleagues in Orkney are doing something similar with Orkney College UHI and that the same is happening across the northern alliance councils. There is huge scope to develop a regional approach to planning for our future teacher workforce, and that could be done using the seven regional consortia.

Dr Arshad: I think that a multipronged approach is required. One way is to work more locally to get more local people interested in teaching and to convert that into people coming into the profession. However, that is only one route—it might be the one for people who do not want to move because of their family circumstances or whatever, so it suits them to come in locally. However, the same might not be true for people who have moved for their undergraduate degree and gone somewhere else; they might be prepared to move to a different geographic area.

It is important that we have balance and a multipronged approach, because actually we want more people to be socially mobile and to move, not least for the cultural diversity of areas. That is really important.

We have to consider several fixes. There is Laurence Findlay's idea, but we must also look beyond that. We have to think creatively about what is preventing people from moving. If the reason is that housing is expensive, do we need to think about shared equity packages that assist people to move? If it is to do with people perhaps not having local networks, are there other ways in which we can help people to settle and to stay? That is the issue. The workforce targets have been really difficult and challenging because we have no idea how people are going to change their lives. At the moment, I suspect that the younger people, in particular, who are coming into the profession and facing 40 years in teaching are not going to stay in one place to teach; they are fairly mobile. That is the beauty and the success of our system. They can go to South Korea or wherever and work for a year, and then come back. Therefore, it is also important to consider the route for returners to teaching.

The Convener: I cannot think of any place in Scotland that would not benefit from having Glaswegians work in it.

Jane Peckham (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers): We do not have direct influence over the targets and so on, but one point that we have made is that it seems that not enough is being done to promote teaching as a viable career through contact with young students in schools. A lot of other professions and trades advertise at career fairs and all the rest of it, but we rarely see teaching being promoted as a career.

We have had quite a few discussions on movement with local authorities and councillors at various events. The preference waiver scheme, which was introduced to encourage movement, could perhaps be adapted in some way to make it a bit more flexible. People cannot put down roots in one year, and who would take a salary hit, in effect, the following year in order to stay in a more expensive place, rather than go back home? Quite a lot of incentives could be considered to encourage those on the induction scheme and probationers to spread their wings more widely.

The Convener: Before I bring in Ross Thomson, Gillian Martin has a short supplementary.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): It is off the back of what Dr Arshad just said, and it is a question for Laurence Findlay. I believe that Moray Council had a scheme that provided affordable homes for teachers. Is that on-going and did it work?

Laurence Findlay: It is not on-going. It was a one-year programme under which we developed a partnership with a local building contractor who was building new flats in various locations in Moray and offered six months' rent-free accommodation. It was successful, in that we attracted a number of people to come to work in Moray but, more important, because we had a lot of publicity for the scheme, it highlighted the issues that we face and got people more interested in potentially moving to rural Scotland. It was a short-term, one-year fix and it worked, and we are looking at similar programmes that we might be able to extend in the future.

Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con): The discussion has been interesting. As the panel will be aware, the region that I represent, North East Scotland, has significant teacher shortages,

just like Moray. In the committee papers, there was a submission from the General Teaching Council for Scotland, which suggested that there should be more work with local authorities, as they have greater insight into local need.

How could that work? What would a formalised structure look like? I know that there might be relationships already, but what would best practice look like? What model would ensure that kind of communication and ensure that local need is met?

Laurence Findlay: It is very difficult, because every local authority will have its own issues. Some will be to do with accessibility, in terms of transport and infrastructure, and some will be to do with the cost of housing. Very often when people move, they move as a package. If someone who has a spouse moves, their spouse moves too, and they will be looking for work. That creates a whole other tension and is an increasing problem.

Across our local authority areas, we have different levels of expertise that perhaps we could pull together more effectively. A collegiate approach, working with the universities and the General Teaching Council, would enable us to get smarter at mapping out exactly what our future workforce needs are, because they will be divergent across the regional areas.

The preference waiver scheme works and rural authorities benefit from it. I would argue that it could be more preferential to rural authorities. Some people who tick the box to say that they will go anywhere still end up in central belt authorities, where there are not the same staffing shortages. We could make the preferential scheme a bit more preferential.

The Convener: Do you mind if I come in on that point, Ross?

I saw that you made those comments in the press today, Mr Findlay. Whose responsibility is that? Surely, if someone ticks a box to say that they will go anywhere, somebody should be saying, "The shortage is there, so that is where you're going."

Laurence Findlay: It would have to be local authorities with the training institutions and the General Teaching Council. A partnership approach would be needed to change that. Rowena Arshad may want to come in on that.

Dr Arshad: It is not on that point but on Ross Thomson's point. It is a practical measure, and we will see whether it works.

Returning to teaching is actually a very big thing. After training as teachers, a lot of our workforce go somewhere else in the world or into another profession and then find that they want to go back into education. We run a return to teaching programme, which we are going to put online in September.

I am interested in approaching every local authority in Scotland to ask whether they would consider investing in X number of places. We are not charging a lot: the course fee will probably be in the region of £400 to £500. If a local authority invests in places, it will help us to select into its gaps. People in those places will be associated with that authority, and we will be able to start networking them into its schools and the local area. I do not think that the local authority's investment would be a lot.

I will be interested to approach the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland about that. It is a very practical option.

Ross Thomson: When I asked trainee teachers what was preventing them from moving to parts of Scotland where there are job vacancies, one said that his local authority had decided to pay for his postgraduate diploma in education, but another said that it was because of the place and that perhaps local authorities do not do enough to sell the place. Do you accept that sometimes we need to do more to sell the region, to attract people to come up?

Laurence Findlay: Absolutely, I would agree with that. We have done a number of things—we did a YouTube video to highlight how beautiful Moray is, what a fantastic area of the country it is, all the outdoor pursuits that one can enjoy and how accessible the bright lights of Inverness and Aberdeen are from there.

I agree that public relations and marketing of an area are a huge issue. All local authorities, particularly those across the north and north-east, work very hard to try to capitalise on the advantages of their areas.

Ross Thomson: If we look at the submissions from, for example, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council, we see that a number of incentives are in place, but every authority is different. Should there be a more national approach to incentives? In the north-east, for example, the downturn in oil and gas has exacerbated the problem of vacancies—as you said, when partners are made redundant and move, even more people are lost.

10:15

Laurence Findlay: A national approach, with some regional flexibility, would help hugely—without that, we could end up competing against each other, which would not help anyone and certainly not the children in the classrooms. I could go to my elected members and say, "Right, we're going to start offering a £7,000 relocation deal,"

and Aberdeenshire could trump that next week by offering £9,000; that would just get us into silly games. A national position on incentives would be useful, but we would like some regional flexibility in how it is implemented.

Ross Thomson: In its submission, Aberdeen City Council mentioned the need for GTCS registration and said that including candidates from elsewhere, even in the UK, can be a protracted process. The council said that there is an opportunity to consider how we make the process more flexible. Do you share that view? What measures could be taken to make the process more flexible?

Laurence Findlay: That is work in progress; a lot of good work has taken place. For example, the introduction of provisional registration has really helped us in Moray, where we have a large proportion of military families—many military spouses are teachers who have trained elsewhere. Provisional registration has enabled us to recruit between 10 and 15 additional teachers in Moray, which is a significant number for a small area.

We get anecdotal evidence that the GTCS process takes some time, but there has been a huge improvement, compared with what it was like a year or 18 months ago. Good work is going on in that regard.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): At our meeting last week, it was suggested that we should proactively recruit in communities where there are shortages—the proposition was almost that we should head-hunt people into the profession. Might such an approach have legs?

Laurence Findlay: I wrote to all parents in Moray in January—there are 12,000 schoolchildren in Moray, so that was quite a lot of letters—to ask whether any of them were teachers, had trained to be a teacher in a previous life or had relatives elsewhere who wanted to relocate and become a teacher in Moray, and whether we could help in any way. We received 165 responses and we have managed to find between 10 and 20 people who are either seeking provisional GTCS registration or are on the distance learning initial teacher education—DLITE—scheme, which our local authority will support them to do. Being proactive—getting out there and writing to people—is a good approach; it can work.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): When we spoke to trainees last week, it came across that there are two distinct groups: people who have worked in another job and want to come into teaching; and young people who want to teach. Is there still a sense in the system that someone comes out of university, is available to go anywhere and will do the job for ever? Jane Peckham might respond to that. It feels as though there are barriers to entering teaching for someone who is settled in a community and has a family—the idea that they might have to go anywhere, or be very restricted in their choice, is problematic. Are people thinking in different ways about people who enter teaching at different times?

Jane Peckham: Yes, I think so. There has been quite a lot of thinking about the need to make training more accessible to people from different backgrounds, such as single parents, but the induction scheme is a one-size-fits-all scheme, which does not suit people with families, mortgages and so on, who might not want to move. For instance, induction cannot happen on a part-time basis. We need to think about how we maintain the standards that are required while offering more access across the board. Our members have discussed with us the difficulty of making choices after they have qualified and how they are held back. A bit more needs to be done on that.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): According to our briefing, the largest shortfalls in secondary teaching are in maths and technological studies, in which there are acute gender issues. I have a question for Liz Lakin. I think that in tech studies, only one in four teachers is a woman. Given your background in STEM, can you say how much that acute gender issue is responsible for putting tech studies at the top of the list of subjects in which there is a shortfall? Is the gender issue what is really behind that?

Dr Lakin: I do not think that the gender problem is behind the shortfall; it is the profile and the status of teaching itself. Across the country there is a shortage of STEM graduates—there is a shortage nationally and internationally. Getting such graduates into employment is an issue in its own right; getting them to consider teaching as a career is an even greater problem.

In terms of courses in universities, education is, unfortunately, still considered to be the poor cousin. We need to raise its profile and recognise it as a profession. In that way, we can raise its status so that people feel that it is the path that they want to choose.

There is competition among STEM graduates wanting to go into industry, where there are much better salaries. Jane Peckham alluded to that earlier, and it is an issue in its own right. However, raising the profile and the status of education to attract those people is very important. Gender issues are part of the problem, but are not the main issue.

Gillian Martin: I have questions on the content and design of teacher training courses. How much autonomy do the panel members who represent colleges have in designing courses. Is design of courses regulated? Is it consistent across colleges?

Dr Lesley Reid (University of Edinburgh): I should probably answer those questions. Our initial teacher education programmes are accredited by the GTCS. They are approved by all the university committees in terms of academic level and appropriateness of content, but the GTCS considers all proposals for new programmes and the balance of subject areas within them.

Gillian Martin: I would like to give witnesses the opportunity to respond to some of the evidence that we heard last week—in particular, that from trainee teachers from Moray House, which Dr Arshad represents. One trainee teacher said that she did not feel that there was enough emphasis on numeracy in the BEd. That was backed up by a couple of her colleagues on the panel.

Dr Arshad: I will start, then Lesley Reid can perhaps continue. We have to go back to the fact that when students start the course, they must have attained—as members know—Scottish credit and qualifications framework level 5, which is far higher than what is required to be taught in primary school.

There is an issue of numeracy confidence, but not necessarily of numeracy competence. Of course, there will be people who have subject knowledge whose confidence level is perhaps lower. The student whom Gillian Martin mentioned also talked about a maths audit that we do, in which students have to self-evaluate their strengths and where they have gaps. She said that she did not find the audit helpful. That might well have been the case for her, but we have evidence to show that many of our students who take the audit find it very helpful because they get to identify their strengths and where they need to do more work.

Last year, for example, we provided quite a lot of supplementary classes for students who identified weaknesses. In those classes, they were taught again how to teach the subject, which is important. One can teach a particular algorithm in many ways: one can say that four times four is 16 and, equally, that four plus four plus four plus four is 16. It is about helping students to learn about different pedagogical ways of doing things. The classes offer such examples, and the students who have attended tell us that their competence, confidence, and subject knowledge have increased. Lesley Reid might be able to expand on that.

Dr Reid: It might help if I give a little bit of detail on what actually happens in a mathematics pedagogy classroom. I come from a primary teaching background, so I feel qualified to talk about this.

Clearly, in initial teacher education for primary school teachers, we are not teaching calculus, for example, to students who have national 5 mathematics. The level of subject knowledge that is needed by students who are working in primary 7 classrooms is the level that, if you like, the schoolchildren are learning at, but that is very different from the pedagogical subject knowledge that primary school teachers need. The kinds of activities that we offer obviously include workshops and lectures, but the kind of teaching that students experience in interactive workshops allows us to help them to use children's misunderstandings and errors, for example, as a natural part of teaching. That requires a very different conceptual understanding of addition and subtraction, and it means that students in initial teacher education are not learning higher-level mathematical concepts, but are getting a really in-depth understanding of lower-level mathematical concepts. In initial teacher education, we use those interactive workshops to explore student misunderstandings, which allows us to model how they would deal with children's misunderstandings. The pedagogy that is adopted is quite complicated; it is not just about being good at calculus and therefore being a good mathematics teacher in a primary school.

Does that clarify the issue a little?

Gillian Martin: Yes, although—

The Convener: I am sorry; I think that the other witnesses want to come in.

Dr Lakin: I emphasise that the initial teacher education programme is a partnership involving the school, the student and the university or other provider. The GTCS's standard for provisional registration enables the student to document their progression through the programme and to identify the goals for their various placements and, within that, their own subject knowledge and development. Throughout the process, they are given opportunities in university-taught sessions and in school to identify their own needs. That process is on-going and active rather than passive, and all the partners are involved in it. It is very important to remember that the education is not being downloaded on to passive students; after all, that cannot be expected when the students are in their own classrooms with their own pupils. They need to actively identify their needs and develop themselves with the opportunities that they have: we help with that in the school and the university.

Dr Arshad: An issue that came up last week was the balance between being in university and being out on a placement or getting on-site learning. At the moment, we are modelling our new masters course in transformative learning and teaching, which is mentioned in the committee's documentation. All the research highlights the importance of spending extensive time in schools across one's training or education programme. In the course that we are setting out just now, we are considering a site-based learning model, in which every week students will spend two days in schools—it might be three, but at the moment it is two—and three days back at the university. That model is slightly different from the current model of block placements or individual threaded days in schools.

The model has been introduced in New Zealand; I know that students there are showing an ability to bridge theory and practice, because I reviewed initial teacher education at the University of Auckland in March and spoke to students. In the model, we talk about the theoretical and the conceptual, and we practise what is being done in the classroom. In the same week, the students go into schools to see what is being done and whether anything is being done differently. They then come back and say, "Well, that was the theory, but this is the practice." That sort of ebb and flow is required. We will see, but international research tells us that that kind of site-based learning works. There is not an either/or. It is, as has been said, a partnership—it is two sides of the same coin.

10:30

Gillian Martin: That goes back to my original question. One of the people who gave evidence last week—I do not think that she was from Moray House—said that there was a period of time when she was only in college and was not able to apply her knowledge in a school and gain practical experience. That comes back to the issue of consistency across the colleges. We do not want people to have to take pot luck because there are different approaches in colleges, some of which might work better than others. How is good practice shared among the colleges? What works and what does not work? It seems strange that someone would spend a year in college—I cannot remember which college it was—and not access a school, but that is the evidence that we were given.

Dr Reid: We are definitely in a period of transition with regard to the design of teacher education programmes. All universities are now moving away from the block placement model whereby students spend a period of time in school with little interaction with university-based learning. All universities are moving to more integrated models.

There is variety in those integrated models—indeed, that is encouraged by the Government, which wants to see diversity in models of teacher education so that choice is provided. The original type that you have described—the block placement model—is in a period of transition at the moment as we seek better integration between university learning and placement learning.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I declare an interest as a member of the GTCS.

Last week, the witnesses also reported some very positive things about teacher training—we should not forget that. Nonetheless, some of the reports that they gave and the evidence that we received in our papers contained shocking comments about the standard of teacher training, particularly regarding literacy and numeracy. I find it disturbing—as, I am sure, do many parents—that it is difficult to know in some, although not all, of the courses, exactly how much literacy and numeracy are focused on; I am not the only member who has tried to ascertain from the various teacher training institutions how much. That is one of the reasons why the convener has had to ask specifically for us to be told. Do you find it disturbing that we do not know how much time is being devoted to literacy and numeracy? The bottom line for any parent or pupil is to ask what hope there is for our youngsters if we cannot train our teachers properly in those areas.

Dr Arshad: I will answer first and then pass the question over to Dr Reid.

I listened to last week's evidence, so I know the concerns that you are talking about. However, it is important that we have other sources of feedback. One source is our partnership with local authorities and headteachers in schools, and another is the Donaldson report, which is research based and tells us that, by and large, teacher training is effective. We must therefore balance the comments that were heard last week, as you say, by acknowledging that there are many other sources of evidence that tell us that teacher education is operating well and effectively.

Liz Smith: May I interrupt you on that point? Parents are seeing declining standards of literacy and numeracy reflected in material from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, from the programme for international student assessment, from the Scottish survey of literacy and numeracy and from other measurements. You say that things are improving, but that does not seem to fit with the evidence that is out there for the public to see. Why are you of the opinion that some really good things are happening?

Dr Arshad: I was going to let Lesley Reid talk about the way in which literacy and numeracy are taught. The hourage is not the only measure, although that may be what is explicitly mentioned in relation to literacy or numeracy. The way in which such learning is developed within the whole programme is also important. My colleagues on the panel may want to say more about that.

The PISA figures are worrying, but we must go beyond teacher education, because something else is happening. The whole area needs to be looked at—from the early years all the way through to teacher education. I do not think that it is just about the education of teachers.

I will let Lesley Reid explain a wee bit about how literacy and numeracy are developed by having specific hours devoted to them and being threaded through the programme in other ways.

Dr Reid: We are providing figures on the number of hours that students experience face-to-face teaching in Edinburgh university; it is not a problem for us to do that. The information is generally available publicly through the key information sets and we are providing it in detail for you.

Something needs be borne in mind when you think about the face-to-face teaching that students experience. If students are undergoing an intensive PGDE programme, for example, in the 18 weeks that they are in faculty with us, there are few hours in the day when they are not receiving some sort of input from the university.

University courses are based on the premise that to earn 20 credits for a university course requires 200 hours of student effort. A student on the PGDE primary programme might receive 45 hours of face-to-face teaching in those 200 hours. There is an expectation that students take increasing responsibility for their own learning in those 200 hours.

Some of the remaining 150 hours or so might be spent on activities that are devised by staff in the university for students to engage with. It is an important part of anybody's professional development to learn how to analyse and reflect on their own learning, and to act upon that; it is an absolutely integral part of continuous professional development for teachers and it is an approach that they will follow throughout their careers. Our students are pretty busy when they are in the university, but there is also a high expectation that they will take part in their own professional learning in that way.

Liz Smith: Dr Reid, I just want to pick you up on that. That is exactly what Graham Donaldson said in 2011, but he also said in one of his recommendations that he believed that, when students are accepted into teacher training, there has to be rigour about their competence in literacy and numeracy. I think that I am right in saying that that followed from a study that was done at the University of Edinburgh a couple of years earlier, in which there was a worrying lack of in-depth knowledge among some trainees about basic grammar and, in some cases, numeracy. Taken together, those two things are the main concern.

The point that we are driving at, which comes back to the original question, is that given that these improvements are being made—Graham Donaldson made his recommendations and the Scottish Government produced an update on their implementation in 2016—why are trainees coming to the committee to tell us that, in some cases, they feel that that education is failing to some degree, and why are we not seeing some improvement in basic literacy and numeracy? That is the central concern.

Dr Reid: Dr Arshad had provided some answer in saying that it needs to be looked at in a much wider context. I can describe the sort of pedagogy that we adopt in initial teacher education. I have described how that works in mathematics and it would work in a similar way in the teaching of literacy. We have therefore protected face-to-face contact between teacher educators and initial teacher education students so that we can unpack student teachers' misunderstandings of these issues.

Liz Smith: Why are there misunderstandings? Is it not the job of the teacher training colleges in partnership with other stakeholders to ensure that those trainees come out with those necessary skills? Last week I was struck by just how interested the trainees were in becoming teachers and their considerable belief that teaching is a worthwhile vocation, so why are they coming out without those skills? That is the key problem.

Dr Reid: I am not convinced that they are coming out without those skills. Let us take grammar teaching as an example. A student cannot go into initial teacher education without higher English, so they have the level of understanding of grammar that is required to pass higher English. That understanding should be sufficient to know what sentence structure is and what nouns, verbs and adjectives are. However, that is very different from being able to teach children about creating sentence structures. Initial teacher education is focused not on doing more on what a noun, verb or adjective is but on unpacking student teachers' grammar understanding so that they can help children with their misunderstandings and teach them to create sentences in ways that are motivating and interesting. That point is worth making, because a child will never write well unless they are motivated to write well. One of the most important

things that we do in literacy teaching is to help student teachers learn how to teach things in motivating and engaging ways. That is a very important part of our pedagogy.

The Convener: One of the witnesses last week talked about the issues that Liz Smith rightly raised and said that they get immersed in literacy and numeracy for one week out of the 18 that they do now. Is that right and, if so, is one week out of 18 adequate?

Dr Reid: That is not a model of initial teacher education that I recognise and I am sure that the representative from the University of Dundee will echo that.

Dr Lakin: Yes. At last week's meeting, one of the students said that he felt that he was immersed in literacy throughout his entire programme, which all the students would have been. They have to submit written assignments and, in my institution—I am sure that it is the same for all the witnesses' institutions—if there are flaws in the grammar, punctuation, sentence construction and so on, those are picked up and the students are given advice and support.

Numeracy is a slightly different issue. I recognise, as does the learned societies group, that there are problems with fundamental numeracy. Those of my students who have said that numeracy is the limiting factor for their subject knowledge know that they need to seek help and advice on that. In the majority of cases, they do, but it is a learning curve. We cannot expect them to come out of a year-long programme, go straight into an environment such as a primary school and teach the basic fundamentals of how to learn maths. It is a continuing process and it needs support as it goes through. That needs to be recognised, not only in the training programme.

Tavish Scott: On the same theme—I will try to ask this question positively—are we getting literacy and numeracy right in teacher training, or are there still things that we need to do more of?

Dr Lakin: It is clear that we need to do more and that we need to do it collectively.

Tavish Scott: Will you give us a couple of examples of what that should be?

Dr Lakin: From a numeracy point of view, we need to look back at the basics. We need to ensure that students are able to identify where their weaknesses and misconceptions are. However, they might not know those until they try to teach numeracy to someone else. I am not necessarily saying that they should learn in the classroom. We encourage them to do micro-teaching in our workshops, in which they teach each other so that they have peer support. That is one way of taking it forward, so perhaps we need to do more of that.

Tavish Scott: For good or ill, there is a lot of political focus on literacy and numeracy. That is why Liz Smith rightly made the point about the Scottish and international studies. How does that come into your sphere of operation? I take the point about starting at a younger age and many other socioeconomic factors, but we need you to teach the next generation of teachers, so how do we ensure that you are on it in terms of literacy and numeracy given the political focus on them?

Dr Lakin: One of our colleagues is partly in the school of mathematics in the University of Edinburgh. We draw on colleagues from other disciplines and colleagues with other areas of expertise so that we can partner with them on different ways of looking at mathematics and numeracy. I think that the university has the potential to engage with its partner schools in that respect.

10:45

Tavish Scott: Is it fair to say that that is happening in all our teaching universities?

Dr Arshad: I do not know; it is happening in our university.

Tavish Scott: Who keeps an eye on that? I appreciate that you represent Moray House and Dundee; are you conscious, in discussions with colleagues from across the sector, that it is a priority and is being carefully looked at, in exactly the way that you have described?

Dr Lakin: We talk.

Dr Arshad: Yes, we talk.

Dr Lakin: We recognise the problems. When something has a high profile because of its political status, of course we stand up and say, "What are we doing?" We are proactive. This is a classic example of action research.

Tavish Scott: That is fair enough; in some ways, the question is for next week.

I have two other questions. First, a witness last week said that, if we ask 100 teachers to define curriculum for excellence, we will get 100 different answers, which surely does not help any of us. I ask you to reflect on the challenges of curriculum for excellence, which has now been in place for 10 years, with regard to how to teach the next generation of teachers.

Dr Reid: I return to my comment about motivation. The strength of curriculum for excellence and the flexibility that it gives teachers will lead to better-motivated pupils; that should be our primary concern. People who are not

motivated will not learn. The choice and flexibility that curriculum for excellence offers in primary school is working and children are enjoying learning—that is really important. I cannot talk in such an informed way about the secondary curriculum.

I return to your point about whether we are getting it right, and assure you that initial teacher education is as research informed as we can make it. We introduce students to the latest research in literacy and numeracy teaching and engage with them on the different ways in which it is put into practice in our schools, so whatever the context when they arrive in school—such as a reading scheme that does not seem to be motivating and exciting—they can use that research-informed approach in the best way to motivate children to learn. That research-informed process is fundamental to initial teacher education.

Tavish Scott: The other question that I put to witnesses last week was about internet security in the changing world that we live in. They all observed that that was not part of how they learned to be a teacher in their courses. We asked the Government about that, and it rightly said that there is work to be done with all of you.

Do you accept that our kids now sit on mobile phones all the time? There are enormous positives to that, but some big challenges—I speak as a father of teenage children. What are you going to do about it? What will we teach in future to help our teachers to deal with the reality of internet safety?

Dr Arshad: Data literacy, online security and so on are a very important area, which we could all do better on. It is about winning the hearts and minds of colleagues and helping them to think about it. They have the pressures about literacy, numeracy, wellbeing and sustainability—you name it, it is all there and all has to be crammed into a very short time. When I became head of school, I said from the outset that it was important that online security was included. We do not put it in as much as we would like to, and I accept that it is an area for improvement.

I have one other important point that moves slightly away from your question. I have noticed that colleagues have consistently used the phrase "teacher training". We use the term "teacher education" in the sector, and the important reason for that is that we do not robotically train people to do A, B and C in a particular way. Curriculum for excellence is one framework, but those teachers will have lots of different curriculum frameworks over the lifetime of their study, and they have to be agentic and adaptive teachers. If they are not, they will have a tramline, robotic approach, in that they will be unable to see beyond it, and will work in silos and not in an interdisciplinary way. Our only resource in a small country such as ours is our people. It is very important that we get people who are able to compete in the 21st century.

Dr Lakin: I completely agree with that. We had a classic example last week. The student who responded to Tavish Scott's question said that she had conducted a lesson about internet security, and that she had done so of her own volition. One of the big problems with the way in which curriculum for excellence is put out there is that it is perceived to be prescriptive. Rather than trying to emphasise the good qualities and interdisciplinary aspects of curriculum for excellence by squashing it and saying that we have to try to get so much on literacy, numeracy and everything else into the time that is available, we try to enable students to be professionals in their own right—exactly as Dr Arshad said. They are the ones who know what the real problems on the ground are, and that student was a case in point.

Last week, I saw one of my own students in school, who said exactly the same. I had asked her about evidence against the professional values aspect of the standards. She said that she had conducted a session on internet security because she had overheard some of the children in her class talking and thought, "Oh, wow—we need to squash this one." That was her professionalism coming through. It comes as part and parcel of the whole course and of students being proactive.

Jane Peckham: I am sitting here quietly, because I find that very interesting. We do a lot of work with newly qualified teachers who are going into induction. I have not yet heard any of the students complain about the levels of literacy and numeracy training, but they do emphasise their lack of confidence about going into the workplace because they have not been taught enough about behaviour management and about matters such as internet safety and how to teach a child with additional support needs. What would help to build confidence is having more school experience tied in with learning. That would be a huge advantage. I vividly remember coming out of college as a primary teacher—I will not tell the committee how long ago that was—and feeling that my first day in a classroom was my first day of learning how to be a teacher. We need to look at that.

There are now no resources that would give teachers confidence in addressing all the grammatical and literacy points, how to teach internet safety and so on. Lesley Reid mentioned reading schemes. A lot of our members no longer have them, because there is no investment in the resources that teachers and students need, and neither has there been any—in fact, quite the opposite—in the support that teachers should

have to allow them to get on with the job of teaching and learning. That is the crux of the issue. It almost does not matter how much training a teacher gets at university level if the support systems and resources are not in place for them when they finally get to do the job. It is extremely damaging and it also does not allow the curriculum to flourish in the way that it has been intended to do.

Dr Reid: I have a final comment on internet safety, which I will link to the teaching of literacy. One of the challenges that we face in the teaching of literacy is that we are teaching students to help children not simply to decode the mechanics of reading but to approach the media texts that they come across all the time. Nowadays, in the balance of things that children read, many are digital texts, which is an issue. Therefore using such digital texts as part of our teaching is important but, behind all that, one of the most important things that we teach students in literacy is critical literacy skills, so that they are then able to teach those to children. In other words, to be able to approach a text in a critical way is a fundamental part of internet safety.

When I was collating the figures on internet safety that were asked for, most of the programme directors that I approached agreed, as Dr Arshad has said, that we are not doing enough on that. However, it has to be framed within the wider picture of a critical literacy approach to all texts, including digital ones.

The Convener: Does Johann Lamont have a supplementary question?

Johann Lamont: Yes. I absolutely hear that a young person has to be motivated in order to write. I plead in evidence that I was an English teacher for 20 years, and I understand the balance in saying, "These are the rules, but we do not want to inhibit you in writing." I think that, in my time in teaching, there was more of an understanding that kids need to hook into rules—that that helps them and gives them confidence. I am of a generation that parsed in primary school—I was quite relieved when we stopped doing that.

On higher English and the level of literacy that is now required, is academic work being done on whether the levels of confident literacy around the current higher are the same as they were five or 10 years ago? I have anecdotal evidence from talking to people who work in universities and who say that the level of competence of young people who come to university is lower than it was. A new teacher with higher English does not necessarily have the confidence and competence in literacy that people might have had 10 years ago. I am interested in whether academic work is being done on that. There is a lot of political interest in the matter, and it would help if academic work was being done on it.

Dr Reid: That is a relevant point. One answer, of course, is the one that I have just given: learning in literacy is very different from what it was 10 years ago. For example, students are coming in with much greater proficiency in digital texts, which is not always recognised in the higher English qualification although they need it to become good primary or secondary school teachers.

On what is involved in being proficient in literacy, children need a good command of vocabulary, of course, and they need to know how to organise their thoughts in writing, as well as all the technical skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation. They need to know all those things as well as all the challenges of the new digital world.

That allows me to make a general point about teacher education. We are preparing teachers for an unknown world. The world has changed enormously in the past 10 years—Johann Lamont referred to that. Although it is really important that we cover in detail all the things that we are talking about—the numeracy and literacy skills that are required—fundamentally, our teachers will need enormous resilience to cope with children in the schools of the future, and to help them to survive and cope. It all has to be framed in that bigger picture.

Johann Lamont: Before Rowena Arshad comes in, I want to make a point to which she can respond. One thing that came out last week was that there is too much theory and not enough hands-on practice. I said that 35 years ago when I was training. You say that that is training. A person does not have to be a robot; it is about good classroom management rather than reinventing the wheel every time they go in as a student or new teacher. Is that work being done?

Does curriculum for excellence still have reading schemes like those that we had, although maybe not in those terms? We had a school-wide policy on marking or on what to encourage in literacy and numeracy. Are those things still encouraged in curriculum for excellence so that, although people create, innovate, energise and motivate, there are still basic things that young people and teachers can refer to in order to develop their confidence, which is pretty central?

Dr Arshad: There are lots of questions there. Your first question was about research. You asked what evidence there is that higher English is sufficient to be the marker that a student teacher has the required level of literacy and whether things are better or worse now. I do not know of any such research that shows that higher English is the marker of a person's capability to teach

literacy. That is a question in its own right. Although I do not know of any such research, that does not mean that none exists. It is quite an important question, because higher English is being used as the signal: a student needs higher English in order to have the level of competency required for teacher education. I certainly want to dig a bit more into that fundamental question after the meeting.

11:00

Your second point was about where the balance lies between training and education. It is not about that robotic training. I noticed that some people said that the training is not sufficient to support children with autism—that was another issue that came up at the committee last week. Within the given timeframe, it is really important that we get student teachers to think about developing a disposition whereby the starting point is not that they see the child as having a deficit. There is a values-based approach that still exists—people still talk about a child who has English as an additional language or whatever as "that problem child". That is a frame of mind. We have to set a framework of values and approaches.

After that, we have to give student teachers some fundamentals on how to engage with classroom management. We have to get them to think about relationship management instead of behaviour management, and to think differently about situations.

We can give them those building blocks, but the question is how we populate those and how the students use them. Only they can do it. Someone can be taught how to react to a child with autism, but the issue might not be the autism; it might be the fact that the child has English as an additional language alongside their autism. If someone is taught in a one-track way, they will not see the situation in an intersectional way, which is a potential problem, because they could be misrecognising or misdiagnosing. We need to do much more on that.

It is a bit like that Automobile Association advert: "I don't know how to solve the issue, but I know someone who does". The students need to know what the support structures are, what the frameworks are, and who to go to and when to ask for support and assistance. That is predicated on the existence of a support and assistance.

It is very difficult. When I was thinking about the autism question, I could immediately see other communities asking, "What about us?" We cannot possibly consider all the combinations, but we have to give the students a framework, so at least they have a top 10 of ideas about the tools that they can pull out of the toolbox. It will not be a complete toolkit, however.

The Convener: Please be brief, Dr Reid.

Dr Reid: I just want to respond to the point about behaviour management. Hourages are devoted in the university to helping students with behaviour management issues. They are taught a positive behaviour management approach that research tells us works best with children and avoids damaging them—that is an important point. Students are taught about that general, relationship-based philosophy because in the modern world, the approach must be relationship based, rather than disciplinarian.

There is a wide range of ways in which students are taught about the initiatives that local authorities and schools use so that they can compare and contrast them. They are given practical strategies to help them with behaviour management. When they go into schools on placement, they are assessed on their behaviour management skills, and they are supported by classroom teachers in the context of the individual classroom where they are working.

Behaviour management is approached in many different ways for students. It is something that we take very seriously, because we have to—if students cannot control behaviour and help children with their behaviour in class, they will be unable to teach.

Daniel Johnson: Curriculum for excellence is very ambitious and broad and is about joined-up learning. That is a challenge for initial teacher education. Can the panel reflect on how ITE has changed in response to curriculum for excellence over recent years?

Dr Reid: There have been many developments in the design of the degree since the introduction of curriculum for excellence. Some developments have involved a move away from teaching discrete subject areas in primary schools. For example, there has been a greater emphasis on interdisciplinary learning, which is seen as being highly motivating for children. That has been a challenge, but has resulted in a lot of very creative teaching. At the end of our PGDE primary programme every year, students give presentations on interdisciplinary learning experiences that they have enabled in school. Those are jointly assessed by headteachers and university staff members. They are genuine examples of high-quality teaching.

Curriculum for excellence has also impacted on the different ways in which we look at assessment in the university. Along with curriculum for excellence came the development of the assessment is for learning programme in Scotland, which has prioritised the benefits of

formative assessment. The shift to using assessment to genuinely enhance pupil learning has taken place in universities since curriculum for excellence was introduced.

Laurence Findlay: One of the most positive moves in ITE has been the fact that it is now more of a partnership between the institutions, local authorities and schools. When I graduated as a young teacher, I was left to get on with it, whereas now, it is recognised that, with the best will in the world, there is only so much that can be done in a PGDE year. Therefore, by working closely with its partners—in our case, UHI and the University of Aberdeen—a local authority can model the continuing teacher education that is required throughout year 1 of a teacher's career and then in years 2 to 5 and so on.

The first things that we cover when teachers come to us for their induction year include how to approach internet security in the classroom, how to approach ASN and how to approach positive behaviour management. We do that not as a one-off but continuously throughout their induction year and then we consider opportunities to develop career-long approaches to professional learning. That has been a big shift throughout the past 10 years of CFE and it is welcome.

Dr Lakin: We consider not only the interdisciplinary learning side, as has been mentioned, but the transition phases. There is a big emphasis on that. I trained as a secondary teacher. We were very much in our own silo. I was in biology, so I was in my own silo with the STEM subjects. Now we break that down so we have not only our STEM students together but times when there is crossover between our primary and secondary students. That is all as a result of the emphasis that curriculum for excellence has brought.

Daniel Johnson: One comment that was made last week—it was not new to me—is that there is an overemphasis on theory and perhaps less of an emphasis on technique, which is the bridge between the theory and the practical placements that students do. Is there a danger that, in preparing teachers how to think about education, we have lost some of the technique? Is that a concern?

Dr Reid: The biggest question that I would always want a student teacher to be able to answer when I watch them teach in the classroom is, "Why are you doing that in that way?" If they do not know the answer to the why question, they will not know the appropriate thing to do when something goes wrong. What you are calling the theoretical aspects of education provide that answer.

Daniel Johnson: With respect, at the end of the year, we ask teachers—albeit as probationers—to stand in front of classes on their own. They might be able to answer the why question, but there is also the how question. Is there a concern that they are not able to answer that yet?

It was interesting to hear Liz Lakin's point about possibly needing to have teachers practise teaching on one another. To my ear, that point about practical experimentation sounded like a need to focus on technique. I do not disagree with what you say, but we surely cannot focus on why to the exclusion of how.

Dr Reid: Absolutely not. I am with you there. We need to do both.

Daniel Johnson: Given the breadth of CFE, it strikes me that we have to cover a lot more in initial teacher education. Is that correct? How much of a problem is the lack of CPD? No one expects a fully formed teacher to be spat out at the end of ITE; teachers have to acquire most of the skills once they are in the job. Is existing provision adequate to do that?

Dr Lakin: That is a good question.

Dr Arshad: That is another several-layered question. I have jotted down the words "outdoor" and "literacy" because I want to give an example of peer learning, which is also an important approach. Taking children outdoors is one of the great ways of motivating them to learn, because they like being out. Further, it is actually good for them to be out. Within that can be literacy sessions and lessons.

I will explain what we do with our students. We video a lecture that students can watch, so that they do not spend time being lectured at by their tutor. That is the flipped-classroom approach, so they then come back in and talk to each other about what they heard. They go out and do their two days on placement. When they come back, they share the way in which things are done in the schools that they were in—they will say, "At my school, we do not use the reading schemes—we do this other thing," and so on. They evaluate that against the reading that they have done and the video lecture that they have watched. That is a different form of learning, in that it involves peers and brings in the outdoors. That means that, in effect, there is double dividending, which is important, as time is short.

You mentioned the CPD aspects and something else that I was not quick enough to catch. The CPD aspects are important, and they involve the local authority partners. For example, in the University of Edinburgh education partnership, we realised that each of our six local authority partners was offering its own CPD. We realised that our partnership should not be doubling up,

with every local authority offering X, and that, instead, if one local authority was offering X, people from the other local authorities could take part in that, too.

What I have said does not include the time that people give to that and how it is paid for. At the moment, all that work is being paid for by the Scottish Government as part of a trial to see whether we can approach CPD in a different way and get people engaged in the next stage of their professional learning and lifelong learning.

I am annoyed at myself for having forgotten the middle bit of your question.

Daniel Johnson: I have forgotten what it was.

Dr Lakin: I want to come back to this business of thinking about the how. We have to remember that there are several ways of arriving at an answer. One of the pushes that we have in initial teacher education, and in education per se, involves getting someone to think about the process that they are involved in when learning and to think about how they arrived at the answer. Maths is a case in point. We encourage our students to ask the children about the different routes that they took to come up with an answer to a maths problem, because there are many different ways of doing that and, without thinking about and identifying that, we will not take on board the fact that people learn in different ways.

Daniel Johnson: I totally accept what you say, but the best way of gaining that understanding is to be an expert. Being proficient in a technique or in multiple techniques is the best way to enable someone to step back and examine how things are done.

The Convener: A question, Daniel.

Daniel Johnson: Before driving instructors teach driving, they first demonstrate their driving skills and reflect on them. Surely looking at the why questions from a purely conceptual basis, without that expertise, is quite limited.

Dr Lakin: Except that that is how we live every day. Unless someone involves their lived experiences, the expertise does not mean anything. When we can make the expertise mean something—make it make sense, if you like—we can use it in relation to further experiences.

We encourage our students to be reflective practitioners all the way through. They are not experts until they have spent some time doing the job, which is why career-long learning is important. The emphasis is on learning all the time, and the students cannot really learn until they can stand back and ask themselves what they did, what went wrong, what was good about what they did, whether something worked, whether the children were engaged, whether the children understood and—to touch on one of the biggest problems that a teacher might face—whether they have evidence that the children are progressing.

Liz Smith: You have talked about the how and the why, which are essential, but what about the question of what the children are learning? Some people criticise the curriculum for excellence because they do not feel that the knowledge content is sufficiently rigorous. Will you respond to that?

Dr Arshad: Depth is certainly important, as well as breadth. I believe that Graham Donaldson said that we need to reach out more to other groupings in the university to populate the depth of knowledge. I agree that the what and the depth are two important things.

We could also improve things by broadening who we partner with in learning, whether by learning from people in industry or from people in the third sector. Teacher education has done very well, but it could do better by broadening its input from different sources.

11:15

I suspect that, in all teacher education establishments, there are people who come from education backgrounds, but there are also people who come from other subject area backgrounds and other work backgrounds. One thing that has worried me is what we see as accredited prior learning. What types of prior learning are seen as being good credentials to become a teacher? We could look at that a bit more creatively.

As head of school, I get letters of complaint from people who have not been selected for a course. In one such complaint, the person said that although they had not spent time in a primary school before applying to be a primary school teacher, they had spent a lot of time in youth work in Pilton, and they wanted to know why their experience was not seen as being of the same value. The work is not the same, but there is transferable learning from it. We need to hone those things a bit more.

Ross Greer: I would like to explore additional support needs training in initial education. Dr Arshad made a good point about the need to take an intersectional approach to that. One in four kids has additional support needs, so there is a massive spectrum. We do not expect every teacher to be an expert in every additional support need but, from the evidence that we have received, we have seen that there is a huge inconsistency between institutions and between courses in how well equipped teachers are. Is more consistency needed between institutions and between courses, and is there a role for the GTCS to beef up its guidance?

Dr Arshad: As I come from an equalities area, of course I would say yes, would I not? I say that because I am biased—I declare that from the outset.

It is important for student teachers to think a lot more about the diversities in their classrooms. That is where additional support needs come in. The fundamental thing is what I talked about a while back: getting past the hurdle of seeing someone who is different or who does not fit in as being a deficit. My personal view—I am not speaking on behalf of any of my colleagues—is that we still need to move beyond that mindset.

Can the GTCS offer more guidance? It offers a lot. It is looking again at its professional standards and values. It has done a lot to contribute to addressing additional support needs. Can more be done? Of course, but should it be done by the GTCS alone? Aspects of additional support needs and equalities issues need to be mainstreamed into the teaching of literacy, numeracy, data literacy and wellbeing; this is not just a wellbeing issue.

Laurence Findlay: Dealing with additional support needs is a huge challenge for us. Since the legislation was updated in 2009, my local authority area has had a 124 per cent increase in the number of young people who are registered as having additional support needs.

We expect a lot from teacher education, which we have discussed in considering what initial teacher education looks like and what its content is. Young people are coming to our schools with increasingly complex and challenging conditions, and teachers need to be able to support them. From a local authority perspective, there are huge risks in that area. A wider conversation is needed on how to remedy that and how we can work in partnership to put in place training that gives teachers the confidence to work with those young people.

Jane Peckham: Additional support needs, in their many contexts, are a complex area. The issue for students is that we could never teach them about everything that could be required, because each situation is different. Nothing would be able to prepare a student for teaching a class of 25 pupils of whom 11 have identified needs.

Dr Arshad said something that triggered me to indicate that I wanted to speak. She talked about the diverse nature of equalities and all the rest of that. One motion at the NASUWT conference last Saturday asked us to start looking into the diversity of entrants into the profession, because that does not mirror the diversity of our nation. I cannot sit here and say that I know exactly what each institution does to encourage diversity but, across Scotland, there is an extreme lack of black and minority ethnic teachers and of teachers with disabilities. Teachers need role models and we need to make everything equal for everybody.

I would be interested in following up what universities are doing to ensure a diverse background of trainee teachers. That would help with a lot of the preconceived notions of what additional support is.

Ross Greer: To go back to part of what I said, we have heard from trainee teachers that there is inconsistency between their courses and between institutions. Do you think that that is accurate?

Jane Peckham: I do, because that is what newly qualified teachers report to us. We have newly qualified teachers who come from all over Scotland to get together to network and discuss their experience. The amount that they have covered varies extremely. We have to build in the students' perception of what they have got, but I still do not believe that there is consistency across the board. I recognise that work is being done to change that, but we still need to examine what is being offered across the country.

Ross Greer: I have a final question. Newly qualified teachers feel underprepared to teach and support kids with additional support needs, but how much of that is a lack of preparation in their training and how much is down to the fact that the schools that the teachers are entering no longer have the professional staff that they used to have, such as support needs assistants? How much of the problem is due to the student teacher's training and how much is due to a reduction in the staff who would otherwise have been supporting them?

Dr Arshad: There is always room for improvement in initial teacher education and it would be complacent of me to say that we could not do more—of course we can. That part can be improved.

There has been the erosion that Jane Peckham and others have talked about. We can consider people who have English as an additional language. That population is growing in Scotland, and all the support areas have been amalgamated, so all the people who could have assisted and held the hands of teachers by saying, "This is the way you can do it," are no longer there. That means that the person who comes out of teacher training needs to be more and more multicompetent and expert in a range of issues. That is scary.

I am not surprised by some of the evidence that the committee heard from final year students who are coming into the profession. People are already nervous when they first come into a new profession, and they understand the complexities. It is all understandable. However, I am not

complacent and, as the training provider, we can do more.

Dr Lakin: I endorse that and add that we cannot apportion blame to any one area. It is a society issue and there is more that we can all do collectively.

Dr Reid: I bring to the committee's attention the fact that our student populations come with additional support needs—they always have done, but the level is increasing. The number of students with additional support needs who we support is increasing.

The Convener: Can I clarify that point? Are you talking about teachers?

Dr Reid: Yes—students in initial teacher education.

The Convener: That goes against Jane Peckham's suggestion that there do not seem to be teachers with additional support needs and so on. Are you saying that a number of such people are going through the system?

Dr Reid: Absolutely.

Jane Peckham: There are some, but there are not enough. That sounds ridiculous, because that is not a target. The numbers are very small and are not visible when we look across the whole school population. I am not saying that there are none.

Dr Reid: I was talking about students with mental health difficulties, for example, who now form a significant number in our population. Some students also have difficulties such as dyslexia. In initial teacher education, we have to cope with all those issues, which reflect the situation in the standard population and are not necessarily visible.

The Convener: Thank you—I just wanted clarity.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Good morning, panel, and thank you for being here.

We have heard a little bit about placements this morning. Evidence taken last week and the written evidence reflects the fact that students' experiences were quite different. I was struck by one of the witnesses saying that her experience between departments in a school had been starkly different for her and her student colleagues. I would like to hear what you can do across partnerships to ensure that the quality of placements is high for all students.

Dr Arshad: I can speak only from our example. We developed a 24-hour course for which teachers who are mentoring students give up their time for free, often on Saturdays or evenings, and they can get accreditation and professional recognition for that work that can be traded in for a masters' credit. We put on that course for the teachers who support our students because we realised that they need to be confident that the language that is being spoken at university and the language that is used in the school in which they are placed, although they do not have to be the same, do not send people in two or three different directions. There has to be an understanding of partnership working in tandem.

That is an example of bridging the experience to enable coherence and consistency for the student experience.

Ruth Maguire: Do you take feedback from your own students?

Dr Arshad: Yes.

Ruth Maguire: What things have the students fed back to you that have made you change how placements are done or take action on what is happening when they are in the school?

Dr Arshad: Lesley Reid might have some examples.

Dr Reid: I tend to pick up things when they go wrong in schools, so in a sense I get a skewed perspective.

Every school context is different. Many of the teachers who support students in primary schools are not given any additional time to do it. Essentially, they are doing it through their own good will. In some secondary schools, our students are supported by student regents who have a more overarching role in supporting students across the secondary school. Sometimes that happens in a primary school and sometimes it does not. The situation would be improved if more official time was allocated to mentor teachers to support our students.

Dr Arshad: I wrote this down earlier: I think that we are suggesting that we need a service level agreement that recognises the work that is required of a school mentor. By and large, they are given time but it is hit and miss. I also do not think that arrangements should be made local authority by local authority; a national agreement should be drafted and agreed by universities and local authorities so that partners can sign up to it. It should not just be ad hoc.

Laurence Findlay: There are huge challenges around this. Almost a quarter of our primary schools in the Moray Council area have no headteacher or have an acting headteacher, and those headteachers are often doing a full week of classroom teaching on top of leading and managing the school. They often see a student teacher as a great thing to have, but it is an additional burden.

I completely echo what was said last week about the practice being very inconsistent. That is nobody's fault. We put additional time into schools to allow them to mentor, but if they cannot get the backfill to cover, that is a meaningless gesture in many ways. In the past, we have tried central mentoring in which one person mentors across the local authority area but that dilutes the experience that a newly qualified teacher or student teacher gets. This is a huge challenge for us.

Dr Reid: The majority of our beginning teachers have positive and successful experiences on placement; frankly, that is due in large part to the commitment of those in the profession. There is scope for improvement but that is not to be forgotten; sometimes I forget it, because I pick up all the difficulties. Placement experiences are jointly assessed by schools and teacher educators. Students generally go smoothly through that experience and are well prepared.

11:30

Ruth Maguire: We had some very positive feedback, but whenever anything relies on the good will of an individual rather than on a system, that rings alarm bells.

I apologise to Laurence Findlay, who is the only local authority person here, because I know that this does not all fall to local authorities. However, what can local authorities do to ensure that there is time in schools? I guess that, in many ways, that is where the buck stops.

Laurence Findlay: Yes, it is. Until we have radically resolved the issues that we have around recruiting teachers and supply teachers, it will remain a challenge. Five years ago we had 400 supply teachers on our books, and it was easy to put one of them into a school and release the headteacher or a senior member of staff to mentor a student or a newly qualified teacher. The number of supply teachers has halved—it is now about 200—and most of them are being used to cover long-term, medium-term and short-term illnesses and absences, and so on.

It is a real challenge for the system. We provide some central support, but over the past five years we have reduced the size of our central team in order to make efficiency savings and budget savings. I do not think that there is an easy answer.

On-going partnership working—including, as I said, work with local providers—is essential. In our case, UHI is based on our doorstep in Elgin. We look at what it can do, what we can do in the centre and then what schools can do. That kind of tripartite arrangement has to be the way ahead.

Jane Peckham: At the risk of being the stroppy one in the corner, I would say that it is about time that we stopped relying on people's good will to provide essential training and support for student teachers and NQTs. The situation is absolutely ridiculous. I am not suggesting that people should be remunerated with huge sums of money or anything else, but time has to be dedicated for that work. There is an ad hoc approach. I appreciate that local authorities have tried to arrange centralised support, but it comes down to the fact that there is no cover and no supply. For something as essential as supporting students—every teacher was a student at one point—to get through their training and their NQT, relying on good will is unacceptable.

On providing placements, I am very strongly in favour of an opt-out system for schools rather than an opt-in system. Equally, we must recognise local authorities' specific issues. The issue needs to be looked at nationally to ensure that the necessary number of placements is available. There have been massive issues in the past few years.

I wonder—I am not saying this in an official capacity—whether some of the variation in standards resulted from the absolute relief that there was a placement in the first place that students could undertake. I do not mean that in a critical way. Particularly for postgraduates, who have to do in-depth one-year training, the fact that there is not that availability is scandalous.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): Listening to the panel's evidence, I have been struck by the many similarities between teaching and teacher training and my profession of nursing and nurse training. There is an academic part, and there is a very skills-based, hands-on way of learning the craft, in which people get their hands dirty, if you like.

We heard from last week's panel that people's experience of placements in schools was sometimes not as good as it could be. It sounded as though a lot of the difficulties arose from the administration of the placements: people were being told at short notice that their placement school was changing and that they would not be going where they had expected to go. There was an expectation that people would travel some distance.

How do universities and local authorities liaise to make the transition from university into the classroom smoother for trainee teachers?

Dr Reid: We have had extreme difficulties with placement this year. The student placement database is now under the auspices of the General Teaching Council for Scotland. The deans of education across all the universities came together this year to try to take action on the

problems that had arisen and they have reached agreement that, in future, there will be an opt-out from placement rather than an opt-in. We hope that that will improve the situation and prevent the last-minute arrangements that were required this year.

Clare Haughey: What will that mean in practice? When I hear the word "opt-out", I am concerned that there are schools—perhaps in Mr Findlay's council—that will say that they do not have time and so will opt out and, therefore, the local authority will not get teachers on placement and teachers will not be attracted to work there.

Dr Reid: The reasons for opt-out will be pretty limited next year—perhaps some crisis within a school that means that it is unable fully to support students.

Laurence Findlay: I am totally in favour of the opt-out arrangements. Opt-out would be in extremis—for example, if both teachers in a two-teacher school were going to be off and we were struggling to get supply in to keep the school afloat and open. What kind of experience would that be for a student teacher? Actually, it might not be a bad experience because it might show them the reality of teaching in Scotland in the 21st century, but it would not be entirely fair on them. Another example would be if the only teacher in a subject, such as religious and moral education, was going to be off ill for six months. What kind of experience would the student get? That is when a school would opt out. It creates some hassle, but it would happen in absolute extremis.

Clare Haughey: How does liaison happen between local authorities and the universities and colleges? Does it happen? How regularly are you in contact?

Laurence Findlay: I can speak only for my own authority. I have a dedicated officer who leads on career-long professional learning. She is in regular contact with our two main providers—UHI and the University of Aberdeen. They have a continuing dialogue and discussion, probably weekly, about initial teacher education and the support that we give to NQTs. It is a close relationship. It is also about working closely with our schools and considering the expertise that we have locally to determine whether we can provide input on behaviour management or ASN, for example. It is an important partnership.

Dr Reid: Following the Donaldson report, all universities established partnership agreements with local authorities. We have six such agreements with the local authorities that surround Edinburgh. From the beginning, Dr Arshad has led that group. It provides regular meetings at which we can discuss issues with local authorities and pre-empt problems in relation not only to placement but wider matters.

In the school of education, we also have a placement unit, where staff are dedicated to interfacing with the GTCS practicum system that manages the allocation of placements. At Moray House, we took the initiative of appointing a member of staff to support me in the management of placement issues this year. We are trying to devote staff resource to the matter to make it run as smoothly as possible, but the fact remains that this year was the most challenging year that I have ever seen in the allocation of placements in 15 years in teacher education.

Clare Haughey: Why is that?

Dr Reid: It seemed to be a numbers game. Schools were simply not coming forward and able to offer placements.

Clare Haughey: Schools or local authorities?

Dr Arshad: Schools.

Dr Reid: One additional thing in that mix might be the fact that we have more diverse provision in teacher education. We have been encouraged to develop different models of teacher education with different placement patterns, so there is a transition from the block placement system to different patterns of site-based learning in schools. That change is difficult for the profession. Although we have employed development officers to go out into schools and educate them about the differences, it is a difficult process of change.

The Convener: Daniel Johnson has a short supplementary question. We are trying to get to the end of this session so could we keep the questions and responses short, please? Thank you.

Daniel Johnson: At the beginning of that last round of questions, Dr Arshad touched on the subject of feedback. There was a specific comment about feedback from class representatives and how that was acted upon at Moray House. As a former student union education officer, it would be remiss of me not to ask about that specific point. What are the structures and what would your comments be on the specific remarks that were made last week?

Dr Arshad: As you will know, for feedback we do a, "You asked, we did" kind of thing. I wrote to Lesley Reid about something that occurred to me as a result of last week's evidence. Students sometimes say something when they are in year 4 and they do not see the benefits of it because they are away. We need to do more about saying to students, "Students from previous years said this; we can't do this, and we can't do that, but we did this. What are you saying?" It is a communications issue.

Tavish Scott: I have just one supplementary question for Dr Reid. In your response to Clare Haughey, you said that this has been the biggest challenge for placements for 15 years.

Dr Reid: It is a challenging experience.

Tavish Scott: Sure. You also mentioned the change from blocks to something different. Can you describe that something different? Part of the problem is that schools were used to the blocks when student trainees were in the schools for a period of time but you are telling the committee that that is now not the case. The system is changing and it is more challenging for the schools to accommodate students.

Dr Reid: In our desire to bring together theory and practice—although that divide is not one that I really recognise—or to integrate university-based and school-based learning, some of our degrees have the student going into a school every week instead of going there for a block of five weeks. That is a very different model.

The new MSc TLT—the transformative learning and teaching degree—that we are offering will put students in schools for two or three days a week as well as putting them on block placements. Our current MA primary degree has students in school for all of their third year, so that is a year-long placement.

Diversity of provision is being encouraged by the Government and universities have responded to that. We have tried to work with the profession so that it understands what we are doing and why, but it is challenging for people to understand which programme the student is coming from and what their requirements are.

Tavish Scott: Thank you; I get that.

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): One of the important problems that we have been talking about is retention of staff. People have given in evidence quite a number of reasons for why there is a problem. The issue is obviously quite complex. What are the main barriers to retaining staff?

Laurence Findlay: The issue is complex. When we talk to people who have left the profession in exit interviews and so on, we hear myriad reasons why people choose to leave the profession.

One reason is salaries and their competitiveness when compared to salaries in other professions, and another reason is the sheer level of demand. One person referred to how the never-ending churn and change over the past 13 years had left them feeling a little powerless as a teacher. I recently spoke to a principal teacher who has given more than three decades of service and will be retiring at the end of this year. She said that she feels quite disempowered and that, in the past 15 years, we have succeeded in over-complicating teaching and learning. She feels really down about it, which is why she has brought forward her retirement.

The headteachers in Moray with whom I work are working ridiculous hours with poor staffing levels because of inability to recruit. Some people are just saying that they have had enough and are choosing either to leave the profession or to step down to less demanding non-promoted roles, as they see them.

There is a wide variety of reasons for the retention problem. It is a big issue for our system to grapple with over the months and years ahead.

11:45

Colin Beattie: What profession do teachers normally compare themselves to, in terms of salary?

Laurence Findlay: Pass.

Colin Beattie: You made the statement about salaries, which is why I wondered that.

Laurence Findlay: Absolutely. People have not mentioned specific professions to me, but they have compared their salaries to other graduate salaries. I have not done any research into other graduate salaries, but they have certainly been mentioned.

Jane Peckham: A person who has a science degree is, because of salaries, far more likely to go into a STEM industry than into teaching. Teachers compare themselves to people who have the traditional professional degrees—for example, in law. That is where they see the salary differentials.

Dr Lakin: There also seems to be a lack of career opportunities for long-term progression, in terms of the changing structure in schools and the fact that the principal-teacher role has been taken away. That seems to have had an impact.

Once again, I say that we need clear evidence. We have pockets of evidence coming through, but we could do with comprehensive evidence on retention, recruitment and everything else, really.

Colin Beattie: There seemed to be consensus among last week's panel about the salary problem being in the early years of a teacher's career. Later in their career the situation is much better, but in the initial period it is quite tough.

Laurence Findlay: There is also an issue about the difference in salary between deputy head and headteacher levels. When we look at why we are struggling to recruit headteachers, we hear anecdotal evidence about, for example, a deputy head from a large primary school being paid more

than they would be as headteacher of a small rural primary school, so they ask why they should take a £5,000 a year pay cut for all the extra responsibility and hassle that goes with being a headteacher. The issue is not only at the start of a career; it exists up at deputy head and into headteacher level, as well.

Colin Beattie: Is it a question of expectation? I come from the private sector. If I got paid £100,000 a year, I would expect to work 12 or 14 hours a day, normally. What is the average working day for a headteacher?

Laurence Findlay: From straw polls that I have done locally, I would say that the average working week would be somewhere between 60 and 80 hours, including significant weekend work. There is also work during school holidays.

Colin Beattie: At last week's meeting, witnesses expressed concern about lack of recognition and the profession not being valued as much as it used to be. Do you agree with that?

Witnesses *indicated agreement.*

Laurence Findlay: We mentioned social media earlier. Something that is very much a 21st century phenomenon is the teacher attack on social media, in which, for whatever reason, a parent or a group of parents takes a dislike to a decision that a teacher or headteacher has made and runs a campaign, sometimes covertly, on social media. That can be very damaging to a headteacher or any other teacher, and can be exacerbated in small rural communities in which everybody knows everybody else. There are huge risks around that.

Jane Peckham: No teacher goes into the job for the money; that is self-evident. There are huge issues around how the profession is valued.

Every year, NASUWT surveys our members across Scotland, and we compare the results year on year. We look at the top five things that our members like about the job and the top five problems. The survey that we did for 2017 is still being collated; I will happily submit it when it has been collated. In the 2016 survey, three quarters of teachers were seriously considering leaving their job, and 62 per cent said that they were considering leaving the profession altogether. Those are horrific statistics, when we consider all the new and young people we are training to come into the profession.

The main reason for those answers was, not surprisingly, workload. It has not been workload for a while; before last year it was always pupil behaviour or something else. The other main reasons last year were curriculum changes—which are an absolute nightmare at the moment—and pay: 51 per cent of teachers are concerned about pay. In the survey from five years ago you can see that teachers did not have the same levels of concern about pay. They are now reaching almost a 20 per cent deficit, so they are starting to pay attention. In addition, they now have to work until—well, who knows when? At the moment they will have to work until they are 67 or 68.

It is basically about inability to progress beyond the main grade scale because there is no promotion available. The restructuring into faculties removed principal teachers and shared headships, for example, so where are people supposed to go? It takes only six or seven years to get to the top of the main scale—the teacher might have another 40 years at work at that grade. There is no opportunity for teachers to develop in the way that they wish to develop. That is notwithstanding the lack of respect for their own judgment. Where are teachers supposed to go for their own development?

Those are the main reasons why the profession is so dissatisfied at the moment.

Dr Arshad: Where does research show that teachers are highly prized? It will come as no surprise to the committee that Finland is a classic example. The key lesson for us is that we have to talk up the profession. We have to think about why Finnish teachers stay on. They do not have the bureaucracy, they have much greater autonomy and they do not have constant testing. They have to learn. Finland is fairly high in the PISA rating.

Colin Beattie: Workload is a consistent theme. Has here been any improvement recently?

Jane Peckham: Absolutely not. I recently had a meeting with Education Scotland, which is supposed to be tackling bureaucracy through inspecting the measures that have been put in place to manage workload. We have challenged the cabinet secretary to go back and have another look because the recommendations are still being largely ignored by schools. The workload is increasing rather than decreasing.

We have been heavily involved in discussing the changes to national qualifications, and we thought that we had achieved something—although we were hesitant to begin with until we saw all the proposals. The removal of unit assessment from national 5 is a huge bonus, but the lateness of it happening and the fact that the national 4 still has it means that there is still a backlog. The whole thing is chaos and teachers are finding that a longer exam will increase workload rather than decrease it.

Obviously we are all still working extremely hard through the assessments and national qualifications group to look at what else can be done to minimise workload, but there are areas in

which we have members who are taking action short of striking because it is the only way they can restrict their workload. It is not an exaggeration to say that we have members in primary schools who are doing 75-hour weeks through pressure from their management, who are being pressured by their employers to meet all the different statistics. They are basically crumbling. Unless something serious is done to address that, we are in for chaos.

Clare Haughey: Are the statistics that you have quoted from NASUWT's "The Big Question 2016"?

Jane Peckham: Yes.

Clare Haughey: Who was surveyed?

Jane Peckham: We surveyed our membership across the whole of Scotland.

Clare Haughey: What is your membership in Scotland?

Jane Peckham: We now have more than 7,000 members.

Clare Haughey: What proportion of the teaching profession is that?

Jane Peckham: It is about 15 per cent.

Clare Haughey: Were newly qualified and student teachers included?

Jane Peckham: Student teachers were not included. The survey was conducted among newly qualified and above members.

Clare Haughey: Thank you.

The Convener: Can you clarify one thing? You talked about teachers being under pressure from the schools and "their employers". Who are their employers?

Jane Peckham: The local authorities are the employers, largely. An example is the introduction of the literacy and numeracy benchmarks, which came in in August. Everything else in terms of literacy and numeracy assessment was supposed to go, but we have been dealing with individuals in management in a couple of local authorities who have said that a lot of work has been done on assessment so that is what they will do. We are talking about a direction from the Scottish Government and Education Scotland that the benchmarks are to be used because they were designed to reduce and simplify assessment, but schools are just ignoring them. We are taking that matter up through other avenues, but it has to be looked at seriously. Changes are brought in for a reason and should be adhered to.

The Convener: Absolutely. Thank you.

Johann Lamont: I have a question on retention—about how the drop-out rate among people who are new to the profession compares with that among people who cash in their retirement early. What is the balance between the two?

Laurence Findlay: I think that there is a bit of a mixture. It goes back to something that we said earlier, which is that the notion of a job for life is disappearing fast: 10 or 20 years ago the person would graduate, and would become a teacher, moving up through the profession on the way until they retired. That has now gone. Often, newly qualified teachers are quite open about the fact that they will do their NQT year and teach with us for a couple of years, after which they want to do a second gap year and go travelling or shift profession. However, they are often also clear about their desire to return to teaching after doing other things. I think that that is becoming more common. There has also been an increase in the number of people who choose to take a break halfway through their career—they might take a year or two out in their mid-40s or even their 50s to do something different, before coming back to teaching.

I do not think that we can pinpoint specific pressure points when people leave the profession; there is a fair mixture.

Johann Lamont: We understand that the world has changed, and that it is no longer the case that people go from school to university and back to school. Are specific pressures now being put on teachers that are making them think about leaving the profession? That is what Jane Peckham suggested, and it is a suggestion that has been reflected in a lot of the evidence that the committee has received.

I want to ask about workload. There is a certain amount of work that teachers have to do, as professionals. To what extent is someone's ability to focus on their workload—whether they are a headteacher or a classroom teacher—challenged by their having to cover for someone who is not in, because the school cannot get a supply teacher, or by their not having a classroom assistant, a learning support teacher or someone who does the admin. I am thinking of preparing worksheets, for example—although maybe teachers do not use worksheets any more. The practical support that I got in delivering lessons allowed me to focus on my teaching.

We can talk about workload difficulties, but to what extent are the cuts in other things in schools impacting on teachers' ability to focus on the job?

Jane Peckham: We know from research that we have done with our members that cuts in other things are having a huge impact. One of the main drivers of the increase in workload is the stripping away of all the additional resources. Obviously,

teaching is not a job that you can walk away from at 4 o'clock every day until 9 o'clock the next day. Teachers recognise that.

When the 35-hour week was introduced back at the beginning of this century, it reduced the average teacher's working week from the high 50s to around the 48-hour mark, but it is now rising again. That is to do with an accumulation of things; for example, tasks have to be done that were previously done by other people. There are also expectations. If an inspection of a school is carried out three weeks into a new academic year, it is not necessary for the walls to be covered with the children's work—no schools inspector would expect that—but schools are asking teachers to produce that. There is unnecessary bureaucracy, and it is difficult to challenge all the various aspects of it. The compulsion to meet perceived needs is having the biggest impact.

Johann Lamont: What about retention of students? I can envisage someone being given the responsibility of being a mentor when they are under the cosh. We heard from the group of trainee teachers who gave evidence to us last week that trainees do not complain because they can see that the teachers who are mentoring them are doing their best. What provision can be made by those who provide initial teacher education that would enable people to report back on their experience of a placement without feeling that they are somehow letting down folk who have been doing their best for them? When I was on my first teaching placement way back in the day, I just got put in with a class because somebody had not turned up. The last thing that I would have done would have been to complain to the college, because it was very good to me during that period. How can we create the space for people to be honest about placements without somehow condemning school staff who are doing their best under difficult circumstances?

12:00

Dr Reid: That is very challenging. We have to work sensitively with our partner schools on that. We have to explain to students that the placement must be good enough for them to achieve the learning that they need to achieve on it, and that they must take professional responsibility for liaising with other staff in the school if they are in difficulties. If a student is having difficulty in the relationship with their mentor teacher, we would expect them to go first of all to the depute head or, if necessary, the head. If that does not work, students have other levels of support while they are on placement. All of our students have a personal tutor who looks after not only their academic development but their pastoral care. In addition to that, they have a placement tutor who visits them on placement and supports them. They also have the programme director, who looks after their whole experience in initial teacher education.

There are lots of different routes for support; students find it easy to access one or another form of support. The support tends to be relationship based—a student who has a good relationship with their personal tutor may go there first. Ultimately, unresolved problems would come to me, as director of undergraduate studies. However, there is close dialogue between the programme director, for example, and the school, if a student is in difficulty.

Johann Lamont: How do you prevent a student teacher from being inhibited from being honest about their experience because the school report might work against them? What are the checks and balances? There is quite an imbalance in power in that process.

Dr Reid: There definitely is an imbalance. The student is assured that they will be supported in their learning and that they have a right to the learning that they need to do when they are in school. It is a very sensitive matter.

Dr Arshad: We could get better at that. We could provide safe spaces for students to share their experiences. Sharing is not complaining: it can sometimes be a space in which to say, "I wouldn't do it that way." Students are incredibly loyal and incredibly professional—as you were when you were a student teacher, Johann. We need to give them space simply to talk about such matters. It is important. If we want them not to walk after the first couple of years, we need to allow them that space.

Dr Reid: Experience tells me that there is not one route that is the answer: support is relationship based, so students often have to have a variety of people to call upon.

Gillian Martin: I will pick up on something that Jane Peckham said about school inspections and unnecessary bureaucracy. As the witnesses will know, we have had inspectors before the committee a few times. The inspectorate really wants to get the message to individual schools that it is not looking for schools to be redecorated for an inspection, as has been described. However, that still happens in individual schools. What steer can local authorities give their schools to stop that unnecessary work? There is still a mindset in schools that they have to go by how inspections used to be carried out. "The world smells of fresh paint" is a phrase that we hear time and again.

Laurence Findlay: We give all our schools quite a clear steer on the expectations for inspection. We tell them that the inspectors do not expect tractor loads of box files with pieces of

paper in them and posters all over the walls. That information is put out loud and clear to headteachers. Of course, what individual headteachers do with it is at their discretion.

Gillian Martin: Why is it still happening?

Laurence Findlay: It is because some people still choose to do it, despite the advice.

Gillian Martin: They put extra stress on their colleagues by having that mindset. How can we stop that?

Laurence Findlay: Some of the approaches that Education Scotland is trying out, such as the short-notice inspections, are having an impact. Previously, schools had three weeks' notice for inspections—they still have three weeks' notice, or two weeks for some schools. That is a lot of time to panic and to get the school smelling of fresh paint and looking good. If a headteacher gets a phone call on a Thursday saying that the inspectors are coming on Monday, that focuses the mind on what really matters to the school's self-evaluation and selling the story of the school.

Moving towards short-notice inspections will help greatly.

The Convener: I bring the evidence session to a close. I thank the witnesses very much for their full contributions and their patience in dealing with all our questions.

12:04

Meeting continued in private until 12:32.

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