



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 13 December 2017

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Wednesday 13 December 2017

CONTENTS

Col.

EDUCATION REFORMS	1
--------------------------------	----------

EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
32nd Meeting 2017, Session 5

CONVENER

*James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)

*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)

*Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)

*Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP)

*Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP)

*Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)

*Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

*Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)

*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Mike Ewart (Education Scotland)

Gayle Gorman (Education Scotland and Chief Inspector of Education for Scotland)

Graeme Logan (Education Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Roz Thomson

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 13 December 2017

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Education Reforms

The Convener (James Dornan): Welcome to the 32nd meeting in 2017 of the Education and Skills Committee. I remind everyone present to turn mobile phones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Our first item of business is our third evidence session as part of the early scrutiny of the Scottish Government's proposed education reforms. Our meetings over the past two weeks have included interesting evidence sessions with academics and experts. Today, we will hear from Education Scotland. The primary focus of the session will be the proposed change to Education Scotland's roles under the reforms.

I welcome from Education Scotland Gayle Gorman, chief inspector of education and chief executive; Graeme Logan, strategic director; and Mike Ewart, non-executive board member. I congratulate Gayle Gorman on her new role. I understand that this is your second week in the job, Gayle—we thought that we would get you in early. I should mention that, until recently, Gayle was director of education and children's services at Aberdeen City Council and improvement leader at the northern alliance.

I understand that you want to make a short opening statement, Ms Gorman.

Gayle Gorman (Education Scotland and Chief Inspector of Education for Scotland): Thank you, convener, and thank you for the opportunity to appear here today. As you stated, last Monday I took up my post as chief inspector of education and chief executive of Education Scotland. As I am so new in the role, I am joined by Graeme Logan and Mike Ewart. The committee will know Graeme from his previous appearances before you. Mike is a non-executive who sits on our advisory management board.

I am committed to working for Scotland's children with Scotland's educators. It is a real privilege and honour to have taken up this post and to have the opportunity to speak to the committee so early in my tenure. I believe that Education Scotland needs to continue to focus on teaching and learning and on supporting classroom and community practitioners to really

make a difference to children and young people in their daily work.

We need to create a collaborative learning community across Scotland through refreshing the profession and empowering our teachers and practitioners to be inquiry-led practitioners. We need to keep a central focus on getting it right for every child and on the totality of children's lives and experiences. We need to provide assurance and evidence through inspection that focuses on research at its centre and on sharing best practice and learning from within and across Scotland and from elsewhere.

We must re-engage and reshape Education Scotland and the sector around improvement, working in partnership with all our stakeholders on our shared improvement aim, which is to improve the outcomes for children and young people in Scotland. We will do that through working locally, regionally and nationally, with a clear purpose to reshape the organisation to meet the needs of the systems and to deliver excellence and equity for all Scotland's children.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to engage with the committee at this early stage in my appointment. My colleagues and I are happy to answer your questions.

The Convener: Thank you. I wish you well in your new position.

I will begin the questions before I invite contributions from other members. Can you explain where curriculum support will sit once the regional improvement collaboratives become fully operational?

Gayle Gorman: Regional collaboratives will work in partnership with Education Scotland and local authorities, which will be the constituent members. Curriculum support, whether that is on literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing or the rest of the eight core areas, will be led through the regional improvement collaborative plans. That will be supported by colleagues from Education Scotland. Once the plans are scoped and fully written—that work is under way—we will align our resources to meet the requests and needs of each regional collaborative. That will not be a one-size-fits-all approach, because every region is different and so the needs will be different. However, we will bring together in a collective and collaborative leadership piece the strengths of each region locally, and then bring to that the national agenda and team to add to that, extrapolate information and then share practice about the curriculum through that model.

The Convener: From what you say, you do not perceive it as being a top-down approach. Education Scotland is saying that the regional

collaboratives will come up with a plan and your role will be to facilitate that.

Gayle Gorman: It has to be a combination of both. If we want a school and teacher-led system, we have to work in partnership with our colleagues locally, particularly in schools. They will feed into the collaboratives by helping and requesting the support that they would like at classroom and practitioner level. The collaboratives will also use our evidence from inspection. We will be able to bring that evidenced national picture from inspection on the gaps, the issues and the successes, and feed that into the system. It will be very much a collegiate and collaborative approach. That is how we want to shape the organisation and work in partnership.

The Convener: How will the establishment of the regional collaboratives affect the way that Education Scotland works?

Gayle Gorman: It is a significant change, and one that I certainly welcome, as it will create a shared space that will allow us to pool resource and bring together in one place our collaborative learning from front-line teachers and practitioners and everyone in the sector, review where the gaps and issues are and then collectively design evidence and research-based programmes that deliver improvements for young people.

Graeme Logan (Education Scotland): We have started to transform our business planning to accommodate that. At the moment, we have nine national programmes, but we are scaling that back to streamline our national offer so that the bulk of our staff can contribute to the regional improvement plans. In other words, rather than develop those nine big programmes we will match staff expertise in a responsive way to the needs in the regional collaboratives. That is a fairly dramatic change in how we plan and deliver our work. The whole delivery model of the organisation needs to change. The days of staff sitting at the centre producing things and putting them on a website are over. We will produce the guidance that is needed, but that will be kept streamlined and staff will be out working with our partners in local authorities and schools in the regional collaboratives.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Good morning. It is nice to welcome Gayle Gorman, who has moved from the City of Aberdeen Council down to Education Scotland. Given that you were so fundamentally involved in the northern alliance, it would be helpful if you gave an overview of how that alliance works. You have made the point that one size does not fit all, which is fine, but obviously, given the ethos and way of working behind the northern alliance, it is probably a precursor of the regional collaborative.

Gayle Gorman: The northern alliance is a collaborative of eight local authorities predominantly from the north of Scotland. We came together just over four years ago, originally to focus on shared issues and to look at them collectively. At the time, the issues were teacher recruitment and numbers. We then quickly realised the strength of that collaboration, given our geography and scale, and we looked at our common issues on the curriculum and children's outcomes and approaches and decided to share our expertise with each other. We are all very different sizes and scales. For instance, Highland is a large authority and Shetland and Moray are relatively small. We understood that we perhaps had a resource in one local authority that we could not match in another, so we decided to become that collective collaborative community of learners and share the expertise. In doing that, we formed relationships at all layers in the system—at director level but also at head of service, service manager and school level.

We began targeting three key priorities: early literacy, early numeracy and poverty. Collectively, we designed programmes that all our schools could access—although some were targeted at certain schools—and we worked collectively to create a network across the region. The northern alliance now runs more than 15 programmes, involving hundreds of teachers and practitioners. We are sharing that collective expertise, learning from each other and creating teacher networks for support and professional collaboration to really impact on children's outcomes. It has been a positive model that has grown in strength over time and is now moving to being the full regional improvement collaborative.

Gillian Martin: You describe an organic change—the authorities started by looking at teacher recruitment and then the approach grew organically. How can we ensure that there is organic growth that is right for the regions that are coming fresh to regional collaboratives?

Gayle Gorman: Timescales are different and are challenging. Interestingly, there are many other collaboratives that have always been in place across Scottish education. For example, the Tayside collaborative has been working for some time and there are developments with the other collaboratives. There have always been groups that have got together, as well as local authority pairings. People are building on that base and growing it.

We will support that. Over the past eight days, Graeme Logan and I have been talking to some of our regional improvement collaborative leads, supporting them in developing a plan and working on an iterative process with them. They will be able to scale up their activities over time, but at the

moment they are focused on the core agenda that we all have of improving attainment for young people.

Gillian Martin: What will the regional collaboratives mean for teachers on the ground?

Gayle Gorman: I hope that they will mean more equity of access to professional learning and development. As I said, one of the issues is sometimes scale, size and resource. Being able to look at that across a region will allow us to take a consistent approach to access to resources and opportunity for learning for teachers. The headteachers and teachers whom I dealt with in my previous role talked about having the opportunity to make a connection and develop a professional relationship with a school in Shetland or a school in Argyll and Bute—it is almost a family of schools approach that we are talking about. The idea of a relatively small local authority school finding a pretty similar partner school somewhere else has huge strength in terms of professional capacity and learning.

Graeme Logan: There is an agreement between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and partners on the core functions of the collaboratives. At the moment, our evidence suggests that there is too much variability in the quality of support across Scotland. We have an opportunity to provide the curricular and improvement support that schools and local authorities need.

As Gayle Gorman said, we have made it clear in our discussions with regional leaders that, as the planning process develops, the offer to schools must be extremely clear and practical. As the plans develop—if we take the example of the northern alliance—we hope to make sure that headteachers and teachers have a clear understanding of what that will mean for them and who they can contact for particular types of support at a regional level.

Gillian Martin: How will you monitor the progress of the new collaboratives?

Graeme Logan: We are working with them on developing the plans. Regional liaison officers have now been appointed to the six regional improvement collaboratives. They will have a brokering and link role, which will involve working with the collaboratives and feeding back information to us on requests for support or additional help. When the plans are submitted, there will be a formal sign-off process, but a phased collaborative approach will be taken, whereby we will say to the local authorities that make up the collaboratives, “These are the right lines, but perhaps you’d like more development in this area and we could help with that.” Other

national partners such as the Care Inspectorate will also come to the table and add to that.

The Convener: A number of members want to ask questions on this theme.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Mrs Gorman, could you talk to us about accountability for decision making? When the committee took evidence from Education Scotland a year ago, curriculum for excellence was the focus of the discussions. We found it a little difficult to know who was responsible for key decisions on strategy. The cabinet secretary has made it clear that he is in overall command of that, but could you explain to us where everybody else fits in? If there is to be a newly reformed Education Scotland, where are the lines of accountability, particularly in relation to the collaboratives that you have spoken about? At a time when we are devolving more power to headteachers, could you explain where the lines of accountability are for decision making in education?

Gayle Gorman: I will make a start and colleagues will speak about some of the nuances in relation to Education Scotland.

As you are well aware, the responsibility for policy sits with the cabinet secretary and the Government. Education Scotland is there to look at implementation and to provide curricular support and guidance for schools and other areas of the sector on the best way to implement curriculum for excellence, to improve outcomes and to focus on the impactful delivery of good-quality teaching and learning.

10:15

Graeme Logan: We are at a period of change in governance. The new Scottish education council, of which we are a member, has met for the first time, and it is developing its remit and role as an advisory council to ministers.

There are other groups. At the first meeting last week, the curriculum and assessment board started to discuss how it wants to oversee the curriculum and its role and remit. We will see those roles and remits firmed up.

As we know, the statutory duty for improvement sits with both ministers and local authorities. Education Scotland is in the process of developing a new corporate plan, which will shortly come out for consultation. We will set out the outcomes and the areas for which Education Scotland is responsible. We want to make that as clear as possible, so that members and the public can see what Education Scotland is about, what our purpose is and the outcomes that we are responsible for delivering over the next year.

Liz Smith: I will probe a bit further on that. The cabinet secretary is very keen on greater autonomy for headteachers, which is a policy that I very much support. Obviously, that means that there will be less power in the hands of local authorities than they have at the moment. Am I to understand that the Scottish Government, and its new council, of which Education Scotland is a part, will be deciding education policy, and that the collaboratives, local government and headteachers are all expected to adopt that strategy?

Gayle Gorman: The Scottish education council met for the first time about 10 days ago. The role and remit of the council is clear: it is not a decision-making body but a consultative group that will work together and feed back from various stakeholders on what are—for want of a better phrase—the wicked issues in Scottish education. It is an opportunity for the cabinet secretary to hear what the issues and people's views are, and then it will be for him to decide how those are taken forward.

Graeme Logan: It is very clear that policy responsibility sits with ministers and the Scottish Government and that the council has an advisory function.

If we take curriculum for excellence as an example, a lot of autonomy and flexibility is built into the policy framework for local decision making. We wait with interest to see how aspects such as the headteachers charter emerge. That is being consulted on. In addition, we will make an official response to the consultation on the education governance bill before it closes.

Liz Smith: Sorry, Mr Logan, but I want to probe a wee bit further on the issue.

At the committee's meeting last December, when we talked a lot about the delivery of curriculum for excellence, there were a lot of concerns from committee members about who was responsible for key decisions within it, particularly in a couple of areas where things had not worked out. We found it quite difficult to know who was responsible.

With the forthcoming governance changes, everybody—whether they are a parent, a teacher or a pupil—wants to know exactly who will be making the decisions that will affect them in their school and what will happen in accountability terms. I am still a little bit unclear about where those lines are. If, as I have said, headteachers are to have much greater autonomy, and the regional collaboratives will have a new relationship with local government and Education Scotland, can we be absolutely clear about what the decision-making process will be? Who will have

final responsibility? Who will be accountable to whom?

Gayle Gorman: At the moment, as Graeme Logan mentioned, a number of issues are out to consultation. The headteachers charter is one of the central consultations. The consultation on the proposed education (Scotland) bill is live. In Education Scotland, we are developing a corporate plan in which we will clearly articulate our role. Some of that will be based on the decisions that will be made by the Scottish Government at the end of those consultations.

Liz Smith: At last week's meeting, two witnesses made the point that, although everybody was united behind the principles of curriculum for excellence, it has lost its way a little bit and it is struggling to convince people exactly what it means. Why do you think the new structure will improve the definition of curriculum for excellence and its delivery?

Gayle Gorman: I am not sure that I fully agree with that statement about CFE. There is still some inconsistency around CFE and we need to do further work on clarity for front-line teachers, who are very busy and actively engaged in learning every day and have the challenge of serving our young people in the best way that that they can. In relation to some of the streamlining work on the benchmarks and the reduction in guidance and so on, I certainly want to continue that narrative under my tenure and scale things back to provide clarity for teachers about the next step in learning.

A classroom practitioner really needs to focus on the young people in front of them and the gaps in their learning. We must support teachers' professional learning through using CFE and really being able to see the progression in core skills. It is about using any advice or information that is there to drive and support that, and it is about taking away some of the confusion that there may have been in the past. Lots of good work has already started on that.

In terms of guidance for front-line practitioners, it will really make a difference if there are core messages that we stick to, along with core guidance and a consistency of approach. Networking between schools is important and regional collaboratives will allow that professional dialogue to be established and strengthened over time.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): First, welcome to your post—I think that you have one of the toughest jobs in the public sector. It is not your fault but, as Liz Smith hinted, a lot of stuff went on in the past, and a lot of us are sceptical about it. You have a big job to do, but good luck with it.

In response to Gillian Martin's line of questioning, you spoke about regional

collaboratives taking different approaches across the country. As you will know from your experience with the northern alliance, many rural areas have teaching heads, particularly in primary schools. They do not have time for yet more governance; they would just like enough time to teach and to learn.

If a regional collaborative comes to you and says, “I’m terribly sorry, chief inspector, but our primary schools do not want this governance stuff imposed on them right now and here’s why—here’s all the evidence about learning,” will you accept that?

Gayle Gorman: I think that it is about listening to the profession. I spoke to our Education Scotland team yesterday about listening to the profession and about remembering what it is like to be a teacher every day and the pressures that that brings.

As a teacher myself—as a professional—I know that we always want to learn from each other, and we always want to do the best for our children and young people. If the regional collaboratives’ approaches are about practical support for teachers and headteachers, my experience is that headteachers welcome that. It is not about governance; it is about support or guidance or getting a quick win from another school that has already learned from trying something so that you do not have to go down a blind alley. Certainly, in my professional experience, professionals are looking for that collaboration and support. That is certainly what I would want to be driving and seeing demonstrated in the regional plans.

Tavish Scott: I take that point but, in Shetland, most of our primary school heads teach and they do not have time to deal with all the stuff in these consultations that are flowing in on top of them—nor do they want it. They want to be able to teach and give the best chance to their kids.

Will you reflect that when the cabinet secretary says, “I want this headteachers charter across the whole of Scotland”? Will you advise the cabinet secretary that there are situations across the whole of Scotland where schools are not ready for this—they do not want to take it on right now so he cannot impose it from such and such a date? Do you understand that distinction about recognising how hard it is for heads who teach to suddenly take on all these extra roles?

Gayle Gorman: I do, absolutely. My role is to provide professional advice and I will continue to voice my professional advice, as I have throughout my career.

Tavish Scott: Good. That is really helpful, thank you. In the 10 days that you have been in post, have you given any thought to the split between primaries and secondaries and how these

governance proposals could impact on them? There seems to be a huge difference between the primary and secondary sectors. We have heard that in evidence in the past couple of weeks. Is that a legitimate concern and how would you see it being reflected by regional collaboratives?

Gayle Gorman: We have to be mindful of the points that you raised in your earlier question. We must be mindful of the impact on all headteachers. Being a headteacher is a hard job.

Tavish Scott: Absolutely.

Gayle Gorman: It is about running your school and supporting the children, families and community that you serve, and we must always keep that at the forefront of our support and focus. There are different asks of different sectors, and that is okay, because it reflects the uniqueness of each sector, including the early years and childcare. We want to see that represented in the scale and approach of each regional collaborative.

Graeme Logan: Yes, absolutely, and the sentiment of the headteachers charter, about empowering headteachers to be leaders of learning, is the right one. As it develops, we need to ensure that it becomes a mandate for headteachers to do the job that they want to do. I was in Shetland a few weeks ago and, as you say, Mr Scott, there are unique challenges in different parts of the country, and we have to ensure that all schools have the support that they need. If the regional collaboratives deliver, headteachers who want support with literacy will know who to go to at a local or regional level, so it will improve the current level of variability.

Views are split about the primary and secondary sector. Some secondary schools already have more support—if they have a business manager, for example—whereas that is not necessarily the case with primaries. We need to continue the dialogue with the profession and ensure that the changes enable headteachers to do the job that they all want to do, as well as they possibly can.

Tavish Scott: In your opening remarks, you mentioned aligning resources to regional improvement collaboratives. What does that mean in practice? Does it mean people and money going to a regional collaborative to help them get the job done?

Gayle Gorman: It means exactly that. We are looking at the deployment of our current central teams, many of whom are based locally. Attainment advisers and inspectors have always worked in a local context but, once the regional collaborative plans are scoped up a little, one of the future pieces of work will involve looking at what they are asking of us, what gaps have been identified and how we can realign the majority of our curriculum teams to support that local delivery.

That is very much the focus of the change in Education Scotland.

Tavish Scott: Do you think that we will end up with a group of professionals in, say, Aberdeen, or wherever the northern alliance may be based—no doubt, there will be a row about that—who will be in that place with a budget and who will be responsible for assisting local schools in the area?

Gayle Gorman: We already have that in some instances. To use the example of the northern alliance, the attainment advisers from Education Scotland have been involved in three of our core programmes for more than two years and are part of the steering group for those literacy, numeracy and secondary mathematics programmes. They have helped to shape those programmes and they are out there co-delivering, so that is already happening in practice. The majority of attainment advisers are based in local authorities across Scotland, so I see that model developing.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I acknowledge that coming before a parliamentary committee on the ninth day in your new job is somewhat intimidating, so I hope that we are being kind to you. I am interested in how the regional improvement collaboratives will work. Critical to their functioning will be the regional improvement plans, which are under development and will be published early in the new year. How are they being put together and what will they look like in broad terms? What opportunities have there been for practitioners and local schools to feed into those plans—up the way, so to speak?

Gayle Gorman: Most of the six regional collaboratives have appointed a regional improvement collaborative lead from the local authorities, mainly at director level. They are co-ordinating the work of the various directors and teams in each local authority, along with chief executives and, in most cases, the convener or chair of the relevant committee. They are doing a performance overview—a contextual piece about the performance across the region, looking at inspection data and also at CFE and curriculum gaps, and bringing in things such as community planning and health indicators, not just education fields. From that performance piece they will extrapolate the key priorities for the region and decide which ones they can focus on in the first phase of their development. As mentioned earlier, people are at different phases and stages.

They will identify the key priorities and work up an improvement plan for the region that says what their key focus is. For example, it might be numeracy in primary 4. The plan will say that they will target that because it is a key area for them and there is an issue with mathematics anxiety in teachers as well as in children and young people. It will say what model they will use, what they will

target, how many events they will run for teachers, what work they will do in schools, how they will support teachers, what the impact will be and how they will evaluate and measure it. They will do that under various themes that are recorded in the joint agreement and build evaluation into it.

10:30

From that, they will create a workforce plan. They will draw from it not only what resource they need from across the region but the resource requests from us in Education Scotland or other agencies and partners, such as those in the third sector. As part of that, they will then create a plan. Like any good school improvement plan, there will be a phase 1 and then a further development for the next academic year. We will try to align the school improvement cycle to run more in line with the academic year.

We have asked local authorities and regional improvement collaboratives to build from the bottom up but we are conscious of the timescales that are involved. Many of the collaboratives have spoken to headteachers. Some have done practitioner events and online surveys, asking their workforce what they would like to happen in order to move forward. Many of them will put in their plan how they will develop that with more strength and depth over time but they are very much trying to feed the practitioner voice in and ensure that what they deliver is what schools and teachers are asking for. That will be the key measure.

Daniel Johnson: That is helpful. What will happen with the plans? Will you have a conversation with each of the regional improvement liaisons in 12 months? Will there be a strict measurement against the plan? How will they be used and who will be measured against them? Will it be just the improvement liaisons or will individual schools be measured against the regional improvement plans? How will they work?

Gayle Gorman: We want to work through some of that detail in partnership with colleagues so that we get it right. In my role, I have to sign off the improvement plans as part of the team. We do that in collaboration and consider the evidence that is available. Six months in, there is an evaluation of how progress is going and, further down the road, there is a further evaluation of the impact.

Ultimately, we must consider whether the approach makes a difference to children and young people throughout Scotland and whether the local, regional and national work is addressing some of our concerns about progress for children and young people. We will examine that but we will also consider progress against the plan and the impact that it has had, and we will take a wide look at the success criteria, inspection evidence

and what teachers and practitioners say has been the impact of the work.

Daniel Johnson: I am trying to get an understanding of who is accountable to whom for what. If a region fails to meet the targets that it sets out in its regional improvement plan, who will hold whom to task and what will the consequences be? Will you fire regional improvement liaisons or will the schools hold them to account? What is the direction of accountability?

Gayle Gorman: The regional improvement leads are employed by the council with which they work. Part of the joint agreement between the Scottish Government and COSLA that established the regional improvement collaboratives was that their leadership would sit with the local authorities that are their constituent members. In each of the collaboratives, there is a lead chief executive who is responsible for overseeing the work of the regional improvement lead. We will evaluate that work and feed the information back to them in terms of the accountability for the impact on children and young people.

Graeme Logan: To follow on from that and Mr Johnson's point about planning, the national improvement framework has had a significant impact in that school improvement plans and local plans are now aligned to the drivers and priorities in it. That is almost a golden thread that we now have in education improvement planning in Scotland. School plans will continue to be prominent and we want the regional improvement plans to take full account of the school priorities. Local authorities have already been analysing those when developing their NIF plans. We have that golden thread, which is based on the drivers and priorities in the national improvement framework. That brings a greater sense of clarity around the improvement priorities at school, national and local level.

Daniel Johnson: You talked about Education Scotland staff being deployed to the regional improvement collaboratives. Will they be formally seconded? Will they be formally accountable to the regional liaisons? Could you explain how that will work?

Gayle Gorman: No, that would not be the formal structure. The staff would still be employed and working with Education Scotland. However, the narrative is about taking a partnership approach, so the regional collaboratives would broker and request that support from Education Scotland when they felt they wanted it. We would respond to that and work in partnership and alongside them. On a day-to-day basis they would work with and through the regional collaboratives, but they would also feed back information to Education Scotland about learning that we could share with other collaboratives or about pictures

that are emerging to help us drive some of the national messaging.

Daniel Johnson: In effect they would have dual lines of accountability.

Gayle Gorman: It would be like a matrix management model.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): I congratulate Ms Gorman on her new position and give her my good wishes for the future. It is good to have someone from the north-east taking such a prominent position.

I represent Moray, which is a member of the northern alliance. I am not talking about something in the new "Star Wars" movie, but about an education partnership in which Moray Council is one of the local authorities. I am keen to explore your vision of how it will develop. I know that another member has already touched on that.

Some of the challenges that are currently faced by Moray are general and some are unique. There is a shortage of teachers and there are additional pressures facing many of our local schools. I understand from staff and teachers that there are now only three quality improvement officers working for Moray Council to provide central support and that, just a few years ago, there were than double that number. The advice and support that teachers are getting are limited compared to previous times.

As part of your vision for regional collaboration, will you help to plug that gap? In the longer term, should the regional collaboration approach take over the role of the quality improvement officers, so that there is equal support across all areas in a region?

Gayle Gorman: I know Moray very well and have had the privilege of being in many Moray schools and working with many of their teachers. In the example of the northern alliance, the QIOs are working collectively. About 18 months ago, the QIOs got together a working group comprising two QIOs from each of the seven constituent authorities to look at their processes for quality assuring leadership in schools, and supporting and making judgments about the quality of the curriculum. They worked together for some time, then ran an event to bring all the QIOs from across the northern alliance together to share approaches and to reach agreement about consistent approaches to evaluation and self-evaluation of leadership and the core quality improvements for schools.

They have taken that further and are working on some elements of joint self-evaluation in schools—I am trying not to use jargon. For example, three QIOs might work collectively to deliver a joint validated self-evaluation in another authority or to

support another authority in doing so. That embryonic work is taking place.

That approach also brings a great deal of professional learning across the teams. Some fantastic work might be happening in one area, so by bringing QIOs together, they are able to share that with more schools more quickly. The work of bringing QIOs together and then learning from each other and helping to support schools with the challenges that many of them face is under way. The other regional improvement collaboratives are looking at developing similar approaches. That should provide surety in the system and address capacity in regions, which is difficult because of the range of local authorities that we have across Scotland.

Richard Lochhead: I will come back to some of those themes when we talk about inspections.

Do you see who is responsible for quality improvement officers changing in the future? If one local authority is only employing three officers, other local authorities that are employing many more will be providing more support to their schools. The response to inspection reports for many schools is, "Oh, we don't have many quality improvement officers to help those schools anymore". That means that there is a problem and there is some urgency about it. Could we just rearrange the whole way in which quality improvement is delivered?

Gayle Gorman: No. That is not how things will need to develop if we are focused on a school-led and teacher-led system. Quality improvement officers are usually former headteachers and senior staff members. It will help if we can bring capacity into the system through headteachers supporting one another—as many already do in cluster arrangements—and strengthen that network of professionals who are working across and within their schools, and beyond. There will be local authority targeted work that QIOs will continue to deliver in their own authorities' areas.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): I join my colleagues in welcoming Gayle Gorman to her new role.

We have talked a little about variability of service provision and capacity. Is there a danger that some smaller local authorities lack capacity and that their voice will be less heard in a region? In my constituency there are several small rural schools that have unique needs. Will they be prioritised enough within larger regional collaboratives?

Gayle Gorman: My experience says that they will. If it is truly about collective leadership and collaboration, then everyone is equal. One of the core principles of the northern alliance is that regardless of scale, size and geography, all

partners have equal voices. That is my expectation for the whole system and the layers of the system. The issues for a one-teacher primary school that has a part-time teaching head are just as relevant as those of a secondary school with 1,400 places. We are all part of the profession and if we create a collective learning community we are all respectful of that. That is fundamental. Many of our schools in Scotland are small and rural, and we must not forget that.

Oliver Mundell: Are you confident that, when it comes to setting priorities for improvement, smaller schools will be given that parity?

Gayle Gorman: That is certainly what I would be looking for.

Oliver Mundell: My next question is on whether geography is the best or only basis of collaboration. You have talked a little bit about families of schools. Some of the small rural schools in my constituency will have far more in common with schools in the north of Scotland than with schools a few miles away in Dumfries, which is the largest town in the area. Is geography the best way to bring people together to collaborate?

Gayle Gorman: Geography can be a significant challenge but also a significant strength. We must be mindful that the regional collaborations are but one set of collaborations: other collaborations already exist, such as the small schools collaboration groups that cover the whole of Scotland and beyond. Regional improvement collaboratives do not preclude schools working in other ways.

In the northern alliance there is also the work of the convention of the Highlands and Islands, the island authorities and there is a close relationship between the Highlands and Tayside, which is not in the alliance. It is not about precluding other ways of working. A strength of Scotland is that its size and scale present opportunities that we should not close down in any way. We need to bear it in mind that there could be similar schools at opposite ends of the country, so we should make those connections.

Graeme Logan: That is part of the unique contribution that Education Scotland can make. As Gayle Gorman has said, our six regional officers will meet regularly and consider how to broker and facilitate work across the collaboratives. In particular, our national curriculum specialists have an overview of literacy and will be looking to connect work. It is very important that, as well as delivering much of our work regionally, we keep our national overview and look for opportunities to connect work across the collaboratives.

10:45

Oliver Mundell: Finally, for now—I hope that I can come back in later—I want to ask about learning centres. We have heard about the distinction between primary and secondary schools in a lot of the evidence that we have received, but in the past few weeks a couple of teachers have flagged up an issue with learning centres. For some, especially primary school headteachers, managing learning centre facilities takes up a considerable amount of time and resource, so they are getting a lot of support from the local authority to ensure that the facilities work well. How do you see the management of learning centres fitting into the collaborative process?

Gayle Gorman: It is for each collaborative to decide the scale and scope of that. Regional collaboratives will evolve over time; at the moment, they are focusing very much on core agenda issues with regard to CFE, developing the young workforce, and the core curriculum. In time, they might begin to look at support for and networks of learning centres.

Oliver Mundell: Under that model, what role should local authorities play with regard to learning centres? Should they still take principal responsibility for administering them?

Gayle Gorman: Regional collaborations are about collaboratives coming together. Local authorities will retain their roles, responsibilities and duties in those areas.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I welcome the witnesses to the committee. Before I go on to other issues, do you acknowledge that regional collaboration was not a popular suggestion in the governance consultation and did not have support in the learning community?

Gayle Gorman: It had a very mixed response.

Johann Lamont: It did, to say the least. The fact that you are implementing something that the profession itself has not given its support to must be a challenge.

You have also said that a lot of different collaborations are going on. I agree with you, but the regional collaboratives are the only ones in which chief executives are being employed and put in charge. Does that make them different?

Gayle Gorman: Chief executives might be involved in other collaboratives, but the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers would be able to give you that information. There are community planning collaborations, for example. In my experience, there are collaboratives with different forms and different names that go across many areas of governance.

Johann Lamont: A community planning collaboration, however, will involve the person who is in charge of community planning. We are supposed to be strengthening education and, in doing so, we are putting a lot of emphasis on regional collaboratives in which certain people will be deployed. However, we already have a structure that involves, for example, education directors. You talked earlier about a matrix management model. I do not know what that means, but I am interested in where accountability lies. Who is responsible for the quality of education in a local authority and in the regional collaborative?

Gayle Gorman: The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 makes it very clear that the duty to improve education sits with the local authority. The introduction of regional improvement collaboratives will not change that. That is the joint agreement that was reached.

Johann Lamont: So why are we employing someone as a chief executive if all they are doing is bringing people together?

Gayle Gorman: You might have picked me up incorrectly. What I meant was that existing local authority chief executives are involved in the management and organisation of regional collaboratives; we are not employing chief executives of collaboratives. I apologise if I was not clear or if I made a mistake: I simply meant that one of the six or seven chief executives in the region has taken on the responsibility to oversee and govern the collaborative.

Graeme Logan: You mentioned directors of education, Ms Lamont, but I point out that only two have a sole focus on education. Part of the reason why we are pulling together education support and resources is to strengthen support at regional level through our contribution. Evidence from inspections and from our “Quality and improvement in Scottish education 2012-2016” report has highlighted too much variance in quality improvement support across Scotland. The purpose of the approach is, therefore, to pull together, work together and share expertise across sectors and subjects to improve quality improvement support in all parts of the country.

Johann Lamont: People in local authorities have actively decided on a policy of giving education directors a broader role, because of their responsibilities in relation to the getting it right for every child policy.

We have agreed, as a policy, that there should be collaboration at local authority level, but because there is collaboration at local level, you have to pull something up into a regional collaborative or to the national level to ensure consistency. Is that not a contradiction?

Gayle Gorman: I might not have picked you up correctly there. The plans that are being developed have GIRFEC as part of their core agenda.

Johann Lamont: No—the point that I was making was about having to have a regional collaborative because there are not many directors who are solely responsible for education. There is a combination of reasons for that. It is partly because there is not enough money in the system and because, philosophically, people recognise that for a young person, education, social work and so on must pull together. That is not an explanation of why you would do that at regional level.

Graeme Logan: You are absolutely right that we include education and children's services in some cases, although there are also much broader remits that include areas beyond education and children's services. The evidence is clear—it is in the "Quality and improvement in Scottish education 2012-2016" report—that we need to reduce variability if we are to achieve excellence and equity. That is one of the main pieces of evidence that underpins the need for regional collaboration to strengthen support on the ground.

Johann Lamont: Earlier, we had a brief discussion about the role of the Scottish education council. I cannot say that it filled me with any great confidence that you said that it does not have authority, although it brings people together. I cannot remember whether it was the CFE implementation group or an equivalent to it on which everybody was responsible and nobody was responsible and nobody could tell us who was making the decisions.

If you are sitting in the Scottish education council, which has the role of implementing policy, what authority do you have? Are we in danger of creating another body on which nobody takes responsibility for identifying issues or concerns?

Gayle Gorman: It is difficult for me to comment on the board that you are referring to because I was not part of that.

Graeme Logan: The Government has an education governance bill out for consultation so that it can clarify the governance model in Scottish education. There is a range of options in that.

At the first meeting of the education council, the rolling remit was discussed, which we expect to be firmed up and made clear, as we expect for the role and remit of the curriculum and assessment board.

Johann Lamont: That board is not a decision-making body.

Graeme Logan: It has an advisory function.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Good morning, Ms Gorman. I do not want to be the only one who has not wished you all the best in your new role, so I feel honour-bound to do so.

There is going to be an expanded role for leadership and a need for professional development. You have hinted at some of that already, but I would like more detail. Professor Chris Chapman said:

"The fundamental issue concerns how you build the leadership capacity that makes that collaboration effective and purposeful."—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 29 November 2017; c 17.]

From my time as a local councillor and as a member of the previous session's Education and Culture Committee, I am aware that leadership is key. The headteacher in the school will make all the difference to young people's lives. That is the foundation for everything. I therefore have a simple question. How is Education Scotland going to make the plans to support the leadership and professional development of those individuals?

Gayle Gorman: I am pleased to say that the Scottish College for Educational Leadership is joining Education Scotland. Plans are already under way to transfer the staff and the 10 programmes for professional learning that SCEL runs, in particular those for headteachers and aspiring headteachers. SCEL will move across to us formally on 1 April, but we are doing lots of work together to get ready for that process. SCEL will bring the expertise from its programmes, which are highly thought of by colleagues across Scotland and which involve a number of participants. We will learn from and grow that expertise.

We will also look at how we develop leadership at classroom level—leadership of learning and the curriculum—as well as at other more formal leadership pathways into promoted posts, and so on. We will draw on the expertise of the evidence-based and research-based learning programmes that develop and support our headteachers, and we will develop a suite of opportunities. We want to draw from that expertise and knowledge in order to fulfil the requests of headteachers and aspiring headteachers and to make sure that we match our offer to their needs.

With regional collaboratives, we look very closely at what the ask is—where people say the gaps are and which issues concern them. We will work with colleagues from SCEL, as part of Education Scotland, to deliver a more coherent and comprehensive offer across the country.

George Adam: On that point, an issue that always comes up is that although some local authorities might be doing great work in education and might talk about sharing expertise and

development, it tends not to happen. In the new system of regional collaboratives, how do you see that sharing panning out?

Gayle Gorman: Collaboration is about a combination of factors. I believe that collaboration has three levels: local, which is from school to school and from practitioner to practitioner; regional facilitation of that, and regional sharing by pointing out and making connections; and national, where bigger connections are made and drawn together and evidence is put in place. We have to make sure that an offer is available at all three layers and that Education Scotland helps to contribute to and facilitate all of them, while supporting the teacher-led and school-led system in which we are developing classroom-based and evidence-based inquiry learning for teachers and headteachers, which then impacts on outcomes and their confidence in leadership. As you have stated, leadership is at the heart of the improvement process for Scottish education.

George Adam: I have spoken to local headteachers in my constituency in Paisley. Those from secondary schools, in particular, have said that they would like to have a forum in which they can openly talk about ideas and push things forward. Sometimes they feel as though the local authority has things that it has to do and they do not feel that that is the place for a forum. At other times, they feel that they cannot access what is happening nationally and put their points across there. Do you see the regional collaboratives system as being a way forward in creating that kind of leadership and in giving headteachers the opportunity to develop?

Gayle Gorman: Very much so. As I said in my opening statement, it is about empowering teachers and the profession to take the leadership role, to drive towards having professional dialogues and to use them to shape responses on the curriculum and the opportunity. They know best what meets the needs of their learners, who are in front of them every day. We must listen to that and shape the national guidance accordingly.

George Adam: I have one final point, which one of my colleagues will probably go into in more detail. There has been concern over the dual role that you have of inspecting and developing the curriculum. I am interested in the way in which Education Scotland has written about those roles as being “complementary”, which is quite different from the way that some of my colleagues might put it later. Will you expand on how you see the roles as complementary?

Gayle Gorman: I will make a start and will then hand over to Graeme Logan. School improvement is a suite of elements of which inspection is one part. If we really want to use inspection to uplift the profession, and not to be a finger to wag at it, we

have to keep it as part of the improvement cycle. We have to be clear that the evidence and research that come out of inspection are then used to support, drive and share evidence-based work with other schools. It is important that inspection is part of the improvement cycle process while, without fear or favour, making sure that there are clear boundaries around it. It is also about creating a culture that sees inspection not as a negative but as a positive that feeds information on improving the system. It is very important that we keep that collaboration. In other systems around the world, that is looked at in a similar very positive way, to keep that balance of engagement of inspection and support across the national picture.

Graeme Logan: The bottom line is whether we see inspection as a tool to improve schools or a stick to beat them with. Our professional opinion is clear that inspection should be part of the suite of improvement activities. That is the international direction of travel. In Scotland, Her Majesty's inspectors have always been involved in improvement work with schools and local authorities. Indeed, that has been recognised as a strength of the Scottish approach to improving education. Mike Ewart might want to add to that.

Mike Ewart (Education Scotland): If I might go back into my own history, I remember that, long before the creation of Education Scotland, concern was expressed that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education both provided advice and inspected against that advice. The creation of Education Scotland has not changed anything in that regard. There is still a canard in the system that says that the central body is both judge and jury. That is clearly not the case. The best evidence on what can improve education comes from the inspection activity. Inspections should be cycled directly into improvement advice. It is for the operation of the inspection function as it stands to be independent—that has always been the case and it remains the case.

11:00

Liz Smith: I will pick up on that point, given Graham Donaldson's comment to us on 29 November that putting the two together would not have been his decision. He made that point based on the fact that he felt that, if an inspection is to work well, it ought to be entirely independent of the body that is overseeing the development of the curriculum. Do you think that he is wrong?

Mike Ewart: I do not think that he is wrong. I am not entirely sure that I understood his remarks to be precisely as you have described them—that he wanted to separate the two functions. I think that he said that it would not have been his choice to make the organisational change that was required.

Liz Smith: That meant that he would not have put the two together. He was very clear about that in his comments. Do you think that he is wrong?

Mike Ewart: I do not think that he is wrong to say that there is a consequence of organisational change. I have lived through it in my role as a member of the management advisory board for Education Scotland.

Liz Smith: Mr Donaldson was perfectly clear in saying that it would not have been his choice to put the two organisations together. He was making the point that he felt that, for the absolute integrity of both organisations, it is better to have them separate and entirely independent. He believed that, even if the lessons from inspections are fed back, it was not appropriate to be both judge and jury. Do you disagree with that?

Mike Ewart: I disagree with it in the sense that, even before Education Scotland was created, that was still a view in the system—that the inspectorate was both judge and jury because it was the source of professional advice.

Johann Lamont: On that point, I do not agree with the characterisation that inspections are either a stick to beat the back with or an improvement plan. They could be something else—they could be establishing that the policy that is being developed is unsustainable, unworkable or unwise. The new chief inspector said that the role of inspections is to implement policy and not to decide policy, but surely an independent inspection system would allow the inspectorate to speak truth to the person who is developing the policy about its consequences. Is that an issue? It is a false characterisation to say that those are the only two choices for the role of inspections.

Gayle Gorman: It is clear that inspection and evidence-based work should drive any education system. Fundamentally, the role of inspection is to help us steer the system and get that evidence, without fear or favour. It is clear that there is a separate director of inspection that provides that information and can use it to provide advice and professional guidance, which can be taken on board to help shape the system.

Johann Lamont: You have said that Education Scotland's job is to implement the policies that are decided by the cabinet secretary. You are already implementing regional collaboratives, which do not have the support of the profession or many people across the country, because it is your job to do it. I recognise that that is your job. Can you not see that, to people outside Education Scotland, it feels very much like a contradiction that you are the person who has responsibility for implementing policy and inspecting and that those two things are very difficult to resolve? I presume that you are not

going to inspect to see whether the policy is right, or are you able to go back and say, "Actually, the inspection tells us that this policy is wrong"?

Gayle Gorman: It is absolutely the focus of inspections to inspect the improvement of outcomes for children and young people. Inspection has always been about that and it will remain so. If things that support that improvement are working successfully, inspectors have a duty to report it. If things are getting in the way, they have a duty to report that, too.

My duty, in the annual summary of that inspection, is to put that information at the forefront so that everyone in the profession and politicians can see the evidence that has been gathered about what is happening in the system.

Johann Lamont: Do you have a responsibility to ensure that, when you give that information, it is acted on?

Gayle Gorman: I have a responsibility, as head of an executive agency of the Government, to feed back that information and ensure that it is fed into the governance structures of the organisation.

Johann Lamont: Our papers say that someone who has given us evidence—perhaps Bill Maxwell—said that you recognise that there is a bit of stress that comes as a result of having two roles and that you would have to set up a Chinese wall between the two areas of responsibility. Do you propose to construct such a wall? What would it look like?

Gayle Gorman: There has always been a clear distinction between the work of HMIE and that of the curriculum support teams and divisions in the various organisations. We will ensure that that continues. There is already a clear distinction around some roles and notice is taken of conflicts of interest that individual inspectors could have because of the local authorities or schools that they worked in. We continue to keep a close eye on that. In the interests of the credibility of inspection, we are fundamentally clear about any conflict of interest and any perceived issues around some of the tensions in that regard.

Graeme Logan: The director of inspection has a custodial and protection role in relation to ensuring that inspection operates openly and impartially. That is a distinct role in the organisation and we will use the opportunity of the new role and remit to look again at the framework for inspection and review and ensure that how we do that is absolutely clear to the profession and the public.

Johann Lamont: That rather begs the question of why the two roles are being brought together at all.

The Convener: That was clearly not a question to the panel.

Gillian Martin: I have a supplementary question. The use of the phrase “judge and jury” in a committee setting is possibly perpetuating a culture around inspection that is extremely stressful for practitioners. How will you communicate your new approach to teachers, who find the inspection process stressful and time consuming, based on their experience of inspections years ago in relation to which they painted all the walls, re-photocopied absolutely everything and went into work on the weekends leading up to the inspector showing up with their clipboard?

Graeme Logan: A lot of work has been done to change inspections, to make them constructive, to work with people and to engage in professional dialogue. In fact, in the past year, 94 per cent of headteachers who were inspected and completed the post-inspection questionnaire said that inspection helped them to improve things and 100 per cent of them agreed that the relationship with the managing inspector was positive and constructive. There has been a lot of progress in that regard, and we need to continue to bust any myths around inspection. For example, we have streamlined the amount of evidence that schools need to prepare in advance of inspections, and that will continue to be the case. We need to keep focusing on the narrative of inspections as a positive and constructive experience. It is true that there is a public reporting element for the benefit of parents, but we want inspection to be seen as being central to the suite of improvement activities that Gayle Gorman outlined.

The Convener: We have kind of deviated from our lines of questioning, so I will ask Ross Greer to deal with the inspection activity, and we will then go back and ask about the structure and the accountability mechanisms.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I will not break the streak of committee members wishing you well in your new post, Ms Gorman.

As part of the Government's reform agenda, it has stated its intention to strengthen the school inspection programme. Will you outline your understanding of that?

Gayle Gorman: Graeme Logan has been involved in those discussions.

Graeme Logan: The programme is being strengthened through clarification of the focus and frequency of inspections. We have started to develop a new standards and evaluation framework. We have also homed inspection in on the things that make the most difference to the excellence and equity agenda, so we are looking at progress on literacy and numeracy, and at how

successful a school is at raising attainment and achievement. We are also looking at the leadership of change, because we recognise that, as members have said, leadership is important in relation to impacting on improvement in school.

We also recently announced a 30 per cent increase in the number of inspections from April 2018. The number of inspections is moving towards 250 a year, and that will enable us to engage with more schools.

We aim to engage with schools throughout the country across the suite of improvement activities, but the main areas to strengthen are looking at the focus, homing in on what we know makes the greatest difference and, through the standards and evaluation framework, clarifying the different models of inspection and when they would be deployed.

Ross Greer: I did not find much evidence in the inspection documentation for mainstream schools that emphasis is placed on inspecting the provision of additional support needs services and on issues around identification. The committee has spent some time looking at additional support needs. The most recent figures, which were out yesterday, show that about 27 per cent of young people have an identified additional support need, so there will be a further proportion with an unidentified need. How will the inspection regime take that into account? An issue that has been raised a number of times is that the lack of emphasis in inspections can sometimes result in a lack of priority given to ASN identification and to the provision of services in mainstream schools.

Graeme Logan: In our new framework “How good is our school?”, we have a new quality indicator on ensuring equality, inclusion and wellbeing. That has been applied in the schools that we have inspected over the past year. The indicator looks at the school's success in identifying and supporting a range of additional support needs, as well as the school's overall approach to improving wellbeing and inclusion. We would hope that, as that information builds up, we will be able to analyse the themes that emerge and then provide further advice on those issues not only to schools and regional collaboratives but to the Government. The new quality indicator is designed to do what you have just described. It is in the fourth edition of the “How good is our school?” framework.

Ross Greer: The overwhelming majority of what we are discussing in the education reform agenda relates to state schools. Mr Logan mentioned issues about the frequency of inspection of non-state schools—that is, schools in the private sector. How frequently would such schools expect to be subject to a full external inspection?

Graeme Logan: In the independent sector, the same approaches apply to how we plan inspection. Given that local authorities are not involved in that sector, we also do quality improvement visits, which are planned annually. We also have link inspectors who link with groups of independent schools. We engage with the sector through those three approaches.

Ross Greer: How frequently should an independent school expect to be subject to a full external inspection?

Graeme Logan: We have moved away from a fixed cycle of inspection, as members are aware. We use a sampling approach to look at different sizes and types of schools. That equally applies to the independent sector across urban and rural areas. We also draw on any intelligence that we gather around inspections. There is not a fixed cycle but, as I say, each of our independent schools has the opportunity to engage through a link inspector, the quality improvement and professional engagement visits and full inspection.

Ross Greer: This is my final question. Following a special inspection, the registrar of independent schools recently informed George Watson's College that ministers believed that it was at risk of "becoming objectionable" on the ground of not adequately safeguarding pupil welfare. A few months prior to that, the school's self-assessment had concluded that its systems for dealing with bullying were fine. Without getting into the specific details of that school and the incidents there, will you comment on whether there is an issue with self-assessments if they can result in a conclusion that all is fine only for the cabinet secretary to draw a serious conclusion about that school's practices a few months later?

Gayle Gorman: Obviously, I cannot comment on individual cases, and there is on-going work in relation to the case that the member raises.

Many local authorities and the regional collaboratives are looking at validated self-evaluation, where there would be peer-to-peer challenge and an external voice within that evaluation. That development is widespread and would be encouraged as one of the checks and balances for self-evaluation.

Ross Greer: That is welcome. How would that relate to schools in the independent sector that are not part of a local authority or regional collaborative?

Gayle Gorman: My experience is that many schools in the independent sector do exactly the same as that through their culture and through support networks. Furthermore, they sometimes ask local authorities to carry out a validated self-evaluation with them, because of the relationships that there are locally.

Ross Greer: Is there an issue with that being left to the culture and being a matter of choice instead of being mandated by a framework?

Gayle Gorman: The issue is to balance the school and teacher-led system that we have been talking about with a scrutinised risk-assessment environment.

Ross Greer: Thank you.

The Convener: We can look at that issue as part of this process.

11:15

Richard Lochhead: With your appointment, Ms Gorman, there is an opportunity to take a fresh look at the whole inspection regime. I think that there is still room for improvement; indeed, I have to say that I find the whole situation unusual, given that we are talking about professionals being subject to inspections that most professions are not subject to. You might be a teacher with 10 or 15 years' experience, but suddenly inspectors appear at your school and can be quite critical of your professional and teaching capabilities. That sort of thing can—and in many cases continues to—damage morale hugely; indeed, we have heard about tears in the staff room and schools finding it really difficult to cope with the inspection process.

I hope that you will agree with me, but I think that there is a lot to be done to turn inspections into a positive rather than a negative experience. Some of the issues that I have heard about include secondary school teachers inspecting primary schools. A secondary school teacher who might have taught chemistry to a class of 25 can inspect a school with primary 3 classes of 30 pupils. There is a huge difference between them.

I have also heard that external factors are not being taken into account. For example, schools in Moray have been left to develop their own teaching and learning pathways, while in neighbouring authorities, that sort of thing is provided centrally, which takes a huge burden off teachers. The teachers in Moray do not get that support to the same degree and are therefore under pressure, and the fact that that might influence the teaching environment is not being taken into account by inspectors.

Given the range of issues that I have highlighted, do you not agree that we need a bit more of a reforming agenda with regard to inspections?

Gayle Gorman: One of the messages that I set out in my opening remarks and which I have been repeating over the past seven days that I have been in post is about working for Scotland's children, with Scotland's teachers. I certainly want

to ensure that all of Education Scotland's activity reflects that narrative and recognises the challenges that teachers face every day and their dedication to and professionalism in what they do. Inspections should be reflecting back that experience and be part of the improvement and positive feedback cycle for teachers across Scotland.

Graeme Logan: Of course we want to continually improve inspections. We listen to feedback and, post the inspection, have engagement through questionnaires. We also meet the teacher unions, some of which survey each school that is inspected and give us feedback that we always act upon.

We should also be aware that an inspection is built on the context in which the school finds itself. In other words, at the beginning of an inspection, a headteacher will outline the context and challenges that the school faces, and the inspection will be built around that.

I just want to re-emphasise the evidence that we have received about the impact of inspections over the past year and to highlight that 94 per cent found that the inspection helped them plan further improvement and that 90 per cent of those who took part in professional dialogue with inspectors found it to be helpful or very helpful. However, we want to continue to improve the process to ensure that, as Gayle Gorman has said, it has as much impact as possible on improving outcomes for children and young people.

Richard Lochhead: Those words are welcome. You talked about busting some of the myths, but these things are not myths; we have to recognise that they are the real experience in classrooms and schools both in Moray and across Scotland.

As I said earlier, if one local authority has only three quality improvement officers and the authority next door has many more, that will put pressure and stress on a school, especially if it already has a number of vacancies. Indeed, there are a number of vacancies in Moray, and letters are going out to parents to explain the situation and the stage that it has reached. Do you not agree that such factors have to be taken into account in the inspection process? The feedback that I am getting from teachers in my area is that that is not always happening.

Gayle Gorman: The context in which a school is operating should be a fundamental part of the inspection process, and that must be reflected by the team. That is the message that we would take back.

Richard Lochhead: That is helpful—thank you.

To pick up on Gillian Martin's point, the presentation of the inspection reports could

perhaps be reviewed, too. MSPs get copied in when the inspection reports are sent to our schools—we get prior notice of them—and those external factors are not reflected to any degree in the reports that I see. The situation in my area makes me think, "It's no wonder the teachers are under huge stress and pressure," but that is not reflected in the reports that we read, which go to the media and to parents, so perhaps you could have a look at that.

Gayle Gorman: Yes.

The Convener: I agree with that point. At times, the inspection reports are a bit like the old-fashioned report cards, which parents used to hate—although my parents always liked mine. *[Laughter.]*

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Good morning, Gayle, and welcome to your role. Thank you for coming to the committee so soon after your appointment.

Education Scotland is going through a period of significant change—there are all the education reforms, as well as your appointment. In light of that, I invite you to reflect on the 2017 United Kingdom civil service survey results, which seem to suggest that there is very little confidence in the organisation's ability to manage change. This year, only 7 per cent of respondents said that they felt that change was managed well in the organisation, which was a decrease on the previous year.

Gayle Gorman: I am hugely disappointed that my new staff team feel that way. Yesterday, we had an event at which I had the opportunity to speak to them all, and I started off by addressing that. For me, that finding throws up huge concerns about the organisation and how staff are feeling. I gave them a commitment that we would change that. I am an open and transparent leader who works as part of a collective team, and I shared my commitment to having an open and transparent dialogue. I want staff to be able to provide feedback on what the issues and challenges are and to call that out. That is how I operate.

I am disappointed, but I recognise that the finding from the survey represents how people feel. Mike Ewart might want to say more about that.

Mike Ewart: Ruth Maguire began by saying that we are going through a period of great change. That is exactly right. The organisation is having to change the way in which it works in order to reflect the regional structure, and it has been through a period when there was interim management in the senior team and when the future of the organisation was uncertain, given that it was in scope for the governance review. My non-

executive colleagues on the management advisory board have observed that, in that context, it is hardly surprising that people felt that the management of change was not in the gift of the organisation at the time—the feeling was that things were happening to it rather than inside it. Now that we have clarity about where the organisation is going and the kind of leadership that Gayle Gorman represents is a firm part of the organisation, we confidently expect the situation to turn around.

I offer this observation as some comfort to Gayle Gorman: when I and another non-exec colleague attended one of the first meetings of the assistant directors in the organisation to scope out the way forward and to begin planning for the change, there was enormous positivity in the room. Everybody was working towards making progress. Nobody in the room said that it was too big a cliff to climb. They are up for it and they will do it.

Ruth Maguire: Thank you for those answers. You will appreciate that I do not have the full details of the survey in front of me, but if 93 per cent of an organisation that I was running felt that the change management was not up to scratch and it was going through a period of significant change, I would probably be looking to take some concrete measures. I welcome the fact that you said that your leadership approach is open and transparent—that has been reflected in your answers—but what concrete steps will you take to make sure that the whole of your organisation comes with you, not just the top leadership team?

Gayle Gorman: Plans are already in place, and Graeme Logan can tell you about those in a minute. We have a transformation plan that colleagues have put together. I want to take a little time to review that. In the past eight days, I have already been out and about round the various bases talking to individual staff, and I will continue to do that, because sometimes systems and processes can be quite intimidating for staff to use. I want to have individual one-to-one conversations, as that is part of how I work and I will continue to do that. I want to go out and hear at first hand what the issues are and really look at and address those. We want to pull together a staff engagement plan through which we have a staff stakeholder panel involving staff from all backgrounds, stages and positions, who will very much drive and oversee the cultural change in the organisation.

There is a requirement to have open and transparent communications. I have already established a blog that will allow me to communicate with staff and have closed forums and discussions. The approach is about creating panels and opportunities, formally and informally,

and creating some success criteria for that. The figures that Ruth Maguire mentioned are concerning and I want to see rapid improvement in them. Where we are not getting things right, staff need to have the opportunity to tell us that, and we need to be able to say, “You said this, and here’s what we did.” We need to be able to evidence that clearly. Work is already under way.

Graeme Logan: In September, we had the opportunity to engage with the whole staff team to discuss the fact that the organisation has a new remit and role. We wanted to dispel the huge uncertainty that Mike Ewart referred to and develop a new top-level narrative for what the organisation is about. The staff developed and agreed the narrative that, moving forward, Education Scotland is a partnership of people who believe passionately in the power of education to change lives. That is why everyone is in the organisation, and it is why people enter the education profession. As Gayle Gorman said, everything that we do will be in the interests of children and young people.

We have agreed that narrative and way forward, and we now need to deliver on that and continue to engage with staff to make the most of the opportunity that the agency has to work with teachers and other education professionals to achieve excellence and equity for children. In the over 20 years for which I have been involved in Scottish education, I cannot remember a time when we had such clarity on what we are trying to achieve as a profession, and that is excellence and equity for every learner in Scotland.

Ruth Maguire: Obviously, there will be significant new and different roles in Education Scotland. You have perhaps answered some of this, but what changes will be required to the structure of the organisation and how will that be managed?

Gayle Gorman: It is too early for me to go into the detail of that. It would be hugely disrespectful to my organisation, as the new girl in the door, to suddenly say, “Here’s what we need to do.” I want to co-construct the new direction of travel on that with my team and my staff. As we have indicated, there have to be some moves in terms of regional working, localised embedded support and partnership approaches. There is that general direction of travel, but we need to look at the scale and scope of what we have. I need some time to reflect and hear from the staff voice about whether they think some bits are working and some bits are not. Also, importantly, I want to hear from the profession and from partners and stakeholders to shape that going forward.

Tavish Scott: I have a couple of supplementaries to Ruth Maguire’s questions, the first of which is for Mike Ewart. I take your point

about the change and transitional teams in the past year, but the information given to the committee on the staff survey that Ruth Maguire referred to goes back to 2015, at which time 90 per cent of your staff did not believe that the organisation could manage change well. It is not new, is it?

Mike Ewart: No, it is not, and the uncertainty is not new, either.

Tavish Scott: But there was not uncertainty in 2015. No one at that time was proposing a change to Education Scotland.

Mike Ewart: There was uncertainty in the organisation about structures, which were changing as a result of the bringing together of two organisations that had very different cultures: Learning and Teaching Scotland and HMIE.

Tavish Scott: What year did that happen? It was in 2010, was it not?

Mike Ewart: It was in 2011, I think.

Tavish Scott: So, four years on, it was still going on.

Mike Ewart: Four years on, there was still a need for organisational change. An organisation does not change quickly, and people do not change quickly. I think that Audit Scotland has said that a minimum of two years is required for a reorganisation to take place. That has certainly been my observation on what has happened in Education Scotland.

11:30

Tavish Scott: Okay. I guess that you recognise that a lot of us are worried about how that will happen in the future.

Gayle Gorman: I recognise that there are concerns in the system and that we need to bring clarity, clear partnership working and joint approaches that provide surety in the system.

Tavish Scott: I entirely appreciate that.

The Royal Society of Edinburgh pointed out in its submission to the committee that the Scottish College for Educational Leadership—which, for reasons that I do not understand, is being taken within Education Scotland—has been “flexible and creative”. I have had that view from teachers, as well. Why is SCEL being taken inside Education Scotland?

Gayle Gorman: It is not for me to comment on that. That was a governance decision.

Tavish Scott: Does Mr Logan have a view on that?

Graeme Logan: That was a policy decision. We want to learn from SCEL’s successes and enable

it to increase its reach by coming to work alongside us.

Tavish Scott: What do you mean by enabling it to “increase its reach”?

Graeme Logan: We want it to reach more schools and to enable its leadership programmes to reach more headteachers. It is clear that there are benefits from its working with us to do that. It is a small organisation that is able to access a greater range of channels, and there is certainly a lot that we can learn from it. We can use what Mr Scott has outlined as a chance to look at how we can learn from how SCEL has engaged with people and its approaches to communication.

Tavish Scott: How will we be able to know that it has done a good job when it has become part of your organisation? Where will the line of accountability be? How will we be able to judge that?

Gayle Gorman: As part of the new corporate plan, we would include the activity of SCEL in its new position in Education Scotland. We would look at numbers and participation and evaluation. That would be part of the overall corporate plan that we would take forward with that evidence behind it.

Tavish Scott: Okay. Thank you.

I have a final question about accountability. I think that you referred to the minutes of the management advisory board earlier on. I went on to your website last night. The last time that such a minute was published was on 16 December last year. Perhaps the board has not met since then, but why are the minutes not available to anyone who wishes to read them?

Graeme Logan: We will need to double-check and come back to the committee on that.

Tavish Scott: If the minutes are a year out of date, that does not suggest that you are hugely accountable, does it?

Graeme Logan: We will need to double-check that. We can certainly get back to the committee on it and clarify matters. We will take a note to do that.

Oliver Mundell: I want to go back to the Professor Donaldson quote that Johann Lamont referred to. He talked about the struggle

“to create convincingly the appropriate Chinese walls inside the organisation to preserve the independence of inspection”,

and he thought that that was important

“so that inspection is not seen simply as the enforcement arm of the development side of the organisation”.—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 29 November 2017; c 10-11.]

Over the bumpy few years of the implementation of the curriculum for excellence, a lot of teachers have thought that inspectors have come in to tell them about things that they know work but which are no longer part of the plan—that they are too teacher led, too traditional and too repetitive—and that inspectors are sometimes not interested in encouraging innovation. What will you do in practical terms to ensure that there is a clear division and that inspections are not seen as being just about implementing policy from the top down?

Gayle Gorman: The focus of inspections is on improving outcomes for children and young people. In many ways, the methodology that people use to do that is and should be entirely school led and focused. An inspector has to leave behind their personal views or their personal professional experience in terms of favour or non-favour. “Without fear or favour” is a tenet of inspections, so I do not recognise some of what Oliver Mundell has represented—it does not resonate—but I understand what he has said about clarity. Inspectors are not inspecting Education Scotland approaches, provision and curriculum guidance; it is about the quality of teaching and learning and the impact on young people. If we keep focused on that, teachers will have confidence in that. Inspections focus on the impacts on children and young people.

Graeme Logan: “How good is our school?”, which is our framework for inspection and self-evaluation, does not endorse any particular method or approach. That is the framework and those are the indicators that inspectors use, and inspectors engage in professional dialogue. If they are asked whether they have seen any examples of X or Y, they will try to connect people who have similar themes or interests and when they see good practice, they will look for ways of sharing it. However, as Gayle Gorman said, inspections focus on outcomes and impacts, not on endorsing particular methods or strategies.

Oliver Mundell: I find it worrying when we hear from people such as Frank Lennon, a former headteacher who was here last week, who says that your organisation

“ought to focus a bit more on schools”

but that

“Education Scotland focuses its attention on the Government because the Government is the customer”.

He feels, as a former headteacher, that Education Scotland

“should not interfere with ... innovation at school level.”—
[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 6 December 2017; c 8.]

Why would he say something like that if that is not the experience of teachers?

Gayle Gorman: I could not comment. I can say that the focus is absolutely on children and young people and on schools and their focus on improving outcomes for young people. Regardless of whether it is curriculum support or attainment adviser work, the focus is on children and young people and certainly, that will be at the heart of the organisation that I am leading. I hope that headteachers and others would see that, understand that and recognise that in the future activities.

Oliver Mundell: Okay, thank you. To add a word of caution, Frank Lennon went on to say:

“As a head, certainly throughout the implementation of curriculum for excellence, I did not find Education Scotland to be particularly helpful at any level, so I am sceptical about whether, structurally, Education Scotland can be reformed sufficiently to improve its relationship with schools.”—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 6 December 2017; c 8.]

As well as the lack of confidence internally among your staff around capacity, has there been a breakdown in trust between teachers and Education Scotland?

The Convener: We should just put on the record that Mr Lennon is not a teacher.

Oliver Mundell: He is a retired headteacher.

Gayle Gorman: I do not think that there has been a fundamental breakdown of trust. I think that we need to develop a narrative about partnership and working collectively for outcomes for Scotland's children and that is why I will continue to repeat the message: for Scotland's children, with Scotland's educators. It is really important that we recognise the hard work and dedication that happens in schools up and down the country every single day. As a national organisation, we have to represent that, champion it and celebrate it. That is fundamentally what we need to do.

Oliver Mundell: I have one final question. Given that you say that inspection is there to assist and help teachers, if these governance reforms go ahead and there are big changes, do you envisage a greater number of inspections to help people through that journey?

Graeme Logan: Yes. As I mentioned earlier, we have announced a 30 per cent increase in school inspections from April 2018. We will also be agreeing the thematic inspection and review work that we can do with each improvement collaborative, depending on its priorities, so that we can get alongside the staff in the collaboratives, help them to see what is working and ensure that the best possible progress is

being made to support schools and to support children and young people.

Johann Lamont: It is helpful to hear from you what the statement of purpose of the organisation is. The only thing that I would say is that our experience in the past has been that although there has been a lot of clarity about what the role of the organisation is, the gap between that and how people experience it has been very wide. That is the real issue. You can have an argument around whether or not you are set up in the right way, but I think that the profession and perhaps the wider group of people who are interested in education—and, I would suggest, the staff as well—are a bit more concerned about the fact that saying a thing and doing a thing are quite different.

I have two final questions. One is on the budget. In the Education Scotland submission, you say that you have a core budget of £21.4 million and that you

“received £12.8 million as in-year transfers”.

My recollection from our budget scrutiny is that this used to be quite common—you would get a core budget and then you would get other bits of money. Will you be making representations and asking for a reasonable budget that you can plan on? I cannot work out the percentages, but if you get a 50 per cent increase in your budget from an in-year transfer, how do you plan for that? Is that something that you will be looking at?

Gayle Gorman: Any organisation would like as much clarity as possible on long-term funding. Certainly, it would be good to have some clarity and surety around long-term funding and how that can be planned for, so that if there is a change in an organisation, we can strategically plan and cover those activities. Anyone in my position would be keen to have that clarity, so that we do not have further change.

Johann Lamont: Somewhere in our papers we have a submission—it might be from the Educational Institute of Scotland—saying that it was difficult to see where the learning directorate in the Scottish Government stopped and Education Scotland started. Clarity around the budget would be helpful, because it feels as if there are short-term bits of money coming out to you to fund a project, and of course everyone in Government likes to be seen funding projects, but that makes long-term planning more of a challenge.

We also got a submission from Colleges Scotland, which is interested in the role of colleges at the regional collaborative level, because that transition is critical for many young people. In fact, early engagement with some groups of young people before leaving school is also critical. Could you say something about how you see the role of

colleges and what that collaboration and sharing of evidence would look like?

Gayle Gorman: I know that there have been some early discussions. In my previous role, I met representatives of that organisation to talk about links and collaboration and how the northern alliance was working. As DYW is one of the core components of the joint focus for regional improvement collaboratives—

Johann Lamont: Sorry, but what is DYW?

Gayle Gorman: I apologise. It stands for developing the young workforce. It is one of the core areas for developing regional collaboratives and we would expect to see strong links and developments in joint working coming forward. There is already some good work with colleges, particularly in giving curriculum offers and flexible pathways in the senior phase, and there is some excellent practice in pockets around the country that we would like to share more widely.

Graeme Logan: The direction of travel would be looking at learner progression, as Ms Lamont suggests. In fact, earlier this week, Gayle Gorman and I visited the Forth Valley and West Lothian collaborative, which has been talking to its local college about progression for learners. Education Scotland would obviously want to work with colleges both through the college development network and through our annual agreement with the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, both to support them and to help with improvement in the sector. Colleges, early learning and childcare are all relevant to ensuring that learners progress as well as possible as they move through the various phases.

Johann Lamont: Is the regional structure for the colleges the same as the regional structure for the collaboratives?

Gayle Gorman: No.

Johann Lamont: So we have got regional regional? I see. I think, though, that the college element is important.

The Convener: Thank you for your attendance. Ms Gorman, I wish you well with your endeavours in your new position. I have no doubt that we will see you before us at this committee on many occasions in future.

11:43

Meeting continued in private until 12:08.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: sp.info@parliament.scot



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba