

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 25 June 2003
(*Morning*)

Session 2

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2003.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Licensing Division,
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ
Fax 01603 723000, which is administering the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate
Body.

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by The
Stationery Office Ltd.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office is independent of and separate from the company now
trading as The Stationery Office Ltd, which is responsible for printing and publishing
Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body publications.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 25 June 2003

	Col.
INTERESTS	13
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION	14
St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2003 (SSI 2003/280)	14
Education (Assisted Places) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2003 (SSI 2003/281)	14
TIMETABLE	16

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

2nd Meeting 2003, Session 2

CONVENER

*Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab)
Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab)
Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP)
*Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP)
Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP)
*Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)
*Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)

*attended

WITNESSES

Shirley Anderson (Scottish Executive Education Department)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Susan Duffy

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 3

Scottish Parliament

Education Committee

Wednesday 25 June 2003

(Morning)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 11:32*]

Interests

The Convener (Robert Brown): I welcome everyone to the second meeting of the Education Committee in session 2. As we are in public, I ask people to ensure that their mobile phones, and other things that make noises, are switched off.

The first item on the agenda is declarations of interests, but there is no one here today who needs to make one, so we shall move on.

Subordinate Legislation

St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2003 (SSI 2003/280)

Education (Assisted Places) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2003 (SSI 2003/281)

The Convener: We have two negative instruments to consider. Shirley Anderson from the schools division of the Scottish Executive is here to tell us what the instruments are about and to explain the background to them.

Shirley Anderson (Scottish Executive Education Department): The two instruments deal with the annual uprating of the remission allocation for parental contributions. The sets of regulations are similar, although one is for the assisted places scheme, which is currently being phased out, and the other is for the aided places scheme, which will continue to operate at St Mary's Music School. The details are numerical, as the regulations reflect an increase in the allowances. The uplift is a 2.3 per cent increase and was based on inflation as at last October. The uplift means that, when a parent's contribution to the fees at the school is calculated, the parent does not pay more than they did in previous years—the uplift should achieve a balance.

The Convener: Do members have any questions on the regulations? They are relatively routine.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): I noted, because of our debates on free school meals and the Education (School Meals) (Scotland) Bill, that one change that the statutory instruments will make is to take into account child tax credit. We want to ensure that the two statutory instruments cover that. Are any more instruments that amend grants to schools and which must take account of child tax credit in the pipeline?

Shirley Anderson: No such instruments are likely in relation to assisted or aided places. The child tax credit started this year, but it will not affect many parents who participate in the scheme until next year, because fee remission is based on the financial year ending March 2003 and relates to parents' salaries as at March 2003. For parents who receive income support, child tax credit did not start until after March 2003. The child tax credit would come into play only for parents who are subject to current-year assessment. We have nothing else to present to the committee in connection with the assisted or aided places schemes.

Fiona Hyslop: We have just passed the Education (School Meals) (Scotland) Bill for

schools generally and it has retrospective effect. Will the regulations cover people for the period back to April, when the child tax credit system started?

Shirley Anderson: Yes. If children start in August, the scheme is based on their parents' salaries as at 31 March. If parents have moved to the child tax credit and their income has moved quite a bit, they can appeal to the school for readjustment and the situation will be taken into consideration.

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I have two brief questions. The regulations amend instruments from 2001. Are adjustments made only every couple of years, rather than every year? Is St Mary's Music School the only place where the aided places system operates?

Shirley Anderson: A statutory instrument is made every year and one was made in 2002 to uprate the fees and charges that are associated with the scheme. St Mary's Music School is the only school in Scotland that participates in the aided places scheme.

The Convener: We are dealing with the instruments under the negative procedure, so anybody who objects must do something positive. Is the committee content not to make a recommendation to Parliament?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): It is desirable that the measures should be passed, in the interests of the schoolchildren concerned. Is that the essence of the Executive's advice?

Shirley Anderson: Yes.

The Convener: Does the committee agree to make no recommendation on the regulations?

Members indicated agreement.

Timetable

The Convener: The next agenda item is our timetable, which we began to consider at our previous meeting. The clerks have circulated a helpful note of the available meeting dates between now and the end of the year. We are highly unlikely to have any bills until after the autumn recess, after which we might have our first bill, which will deal with additional support needs and other matters. We will have to produce a stage 1 report at that time. Do we want to make any visits or have briefings before then? That might be worth while.

I am conscious that our remit is double sided, as it covers the school system and young people. I am anxious to balance our remit and to consider potentially positive subjects. Several suggestions were made at our previous meeting. I am keen on examining youth work and youth organisations, but I do not know whether that has general support. What are members' thoughts?

All we want is a kick-off issue at the moment. Obviously, we cannot do everything initially, but we want to be able to advertise something before, or early in, the recess. We can programme other issues later on down the line.

Fiona Hyslop: From what you are saying, it appears that we have six meetings before we are likely to hit legislation.

The Convener: Yes.

Fiona Hyslop: I feel strongly—as do other members—that we need to prepare ourselves properly for the proposed bill on additional support for learning. I do not want simply to wait until the bill comes before us. I take your point that balancing our agenda is a challenge. I would be reluctant, however, to have an agenda that focused on young people and youth organisations but had no purpose. I do not mean that in a derogatory sense, but I think that our agenda should be focused on something that will be useful. Before agreeing to a proposal, I would like to have a more specific idea about what we are trying to achieve. I strongly emphasise focusing on the bill, as we must ensure that we do a proper job with it.

Dr Murray: I agree. The proposed bill on additional support for learning deals with a complex and sensitive area. Ken Macintosh was involved in the production of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee's report on the issue, but I do not think that anyone on the present Education Committee has done any work on it. It is important that the rest of us get a chance to prepare ourselves before the legislation arrives.

At the previous meeting, we talked about doing some work on discipline issues, which the teaching unions have raised. There might be some legislation on that further on down the track and we might be better placed to have some input into that by examining the issue earlier rather than later.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): I am not against discussing youth issues, as they are important. Is there a need to make a decision today? I thought that we would have a discussion paper on work to be done over the summer.

The Convener: In broad terms, you are right, and we will deal with the issue of the committee's away day in a moment. However, we need to make a decision about the first subject that we will deal with so that we can arrange witnesses and so on over the summer. That way, we can start work straight away after the recess, rather than dither about.

If we took forward the initial preparatory work on the bill and related issues, what would the procedure be? Would we advertise for witnesses?

Martin Verity (Clerk): The committee could do preparatory work by taking witnesses as a stand-alone item, in a sense. In other words, without having to conduct a formal inquiry, the committee could invite people to give evidence for the information of the committee and the public.

The Convener: I would be quite keen to have the committee visit some places in that context. That would allow us to see what happens in special schools, schools that have been mainstreamed and so on. Do members think that that would be useful?

Fiona Hyslop: I am conscious that no one on this committee represents Scotland north of the Glasgow-Edinburgh divide. It is essential that the committee travel further north, especially to the Highlands, when we investigate issues.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I think that we have a moral obligation to consider the issue of special educational needs, as it is uppermost in ministers' minds. We ought to conduct visits in relation to that issue, if they could be fitted in.

If there is room for us to consider two issues, the issues of discipline and the stress that is caused to teachers, which Ken Macintosh and Elaine Murray mentioned, are pressing and topical. The strategy for youth organisations could follow on from that.

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): I agree with everything that Lord James said. There is an emerging consensus around the view that the special needs and additional support for learning agenda and the discipline issue should be our short-term priorities. That point arose at a committee meeting that I attended yesterday.

It is always convenient for the clerks to feel that they have their whole year planned out and, if I were a clerk, I would want to do that as well. However, I think that it might be useful if we were able to leave the choice about the post-Christmas agenda—whether we pick up some of the issues surrounding youth organisations or the pre-fives agenda, as suggested in the legacy paper, for example—to a later meeting, perhaps in November. By that time, because of other developments, it might be easier to determine what the most logical choice would be.

The Convener: I do not want any decisions to be made on the long-term programme today. I imagine that we will work on a work programme paper on our away day. I simply wanted to ensure that we had an idea of an agenda that we could work with in the period between the summer and October recesses to ensure that we do not waste time.

11:45

Fiona Hyslop: It is not a case of any subject's being less important than others; we simply have to work out what we can usefully do in the time that we have. What can we most usefully do and when?

I am conscious of the legacy paper and the work that was done by the previous committee—I intimated to the convener that I might want to raise this issue. In the previous session, the Education, Culture and Sport Committee addressed school transport issues because of two petitions that it had received—one was about the volume of traffic on rural roads and the other was about personal safety issues. That committee wrote to the Executive, pressing it to issue new guidelines. The minister, then Cathy Jamieson, intimated that new guidelines were due early in the year. However, we are now in June and there are still no guidelines. I am not suggesting that we take the matter on as an inquiry issue, but we could use the early part of the time after the recess to contact the Executive to ensure that the issue is followed up. We need to keep an eye on the issue of school transportation. Also, there is the basic issue of accountability.

I, like many others, have concerns about the new public-private partnership schools. I do not necessarily want to have a debate about the source of funding and so on, but there are concerns about the suitability of the accommodation in the massive new-build programme that is taking place across Scotland. That issue is time sensitive, as the next phase of PPP projects are coming on stream. We might want to keep a watching brief on that issue as well. Perhaps we should appoint reporters to monitor the subjects that we want to keep an eye

on, rather than those that we want to hold an inquiry into.

I would prefer our initial work to focus on discipline. We can deal with youth work and youth organisations when we can do something useful with the information that we gather on that subject. I might challenge considering the discipline agenda with the early years, child care and pre-fives agenda, given the issues surrounding monitoring and inspections. However, the issue is time sensitive. Could we more usefully examine early years, child care and the pre-fives agenda later on? Is the discipline issue more pressing? Should we consider that issue now?

The Convener: I will deal with your specific points. Without prejudice to what we might do with the issue, I see no reason why we cannot write to the Executive about school transport to ask for an update. We could discuss the matter and decide whether to go further with it at the first or second meeting after the recess.

The PPP buildings issue is more complex. It is an important issue, but I am not sure that it is best approached by using a reporter. Perhaps we can deal with that issue on our away day.

Some interesting issues came out of this morning's informal briefing by the Executive officials. One is the baseline report on the improvement framework, which is coming down the line. Another is the children's hearing review, which might not be entirely within our remit, and another is assessment—testing, bureaucracy and so on. I would be keen to have a go at that issue at some point, but I think that that would come into the later part of our work programme.

Two themes are emerging. The first is that of the proposed bill on additional support for learning. What could we usefully do in that regard? We might want to have a formal briefing by Executive officials as to the current state of play on that. I do not know how much information they would be in a position to share with us, given that work on the bill is on-going, but we might be able to get an insight into the issues that have emerged in the consultation process.

Dr Murray: We should steer clear while ministers are considering the matter.

The Convener: I accept that, but an official briefing would start us off.

Mr Macintosh: That is a good idea. An outline paper or a presentation would be handy. I would welcome evidence from some of the groups that are involved. Any number of organisations represent different views and some organisations might co-ordinate views that cover the range of special educational needs or additional support for learning needs. We should hear from a parents'

group. I would be keen to go early into the concern side of the argument, if members know what I mean. I have no views on the group that we should hear from, but it would be useful to hear early on from service users, rather than providers.

The Convener: That can be readily done and is something to be worked up—we cannot discuss details today. As I am sure that other members have, I have met one or two groups privately, so I have a feel for the issues.

Ms Alexander: The Auditor General for Scotland and Accounts Commission for Scotland published a report this summer that showed that difficult resource issues are involved, as well as policy issues. We do not have the notion of giving every child individualised education, so we must balance how, in mainstream schools, we provide education for a large number of children as well as specialised support for those who need it. Resource considerations are inevitable, particularly if we are trying to twin-track provision between specialist schools and mainstream schools and to shift the balance. The suggestion that decreasing the number of kids in special schools by a percentage will mean a one-to-one resource transfer into the mainstream sector is not how things work in reality.

Understanding the resource implications of policy choices will be useful as we listen to parents' groups and providers, and when we—inevitably—make recommendations that do not have totally open-ended cost implications. Could we ask the Accounts Commission, which produced that critical report, to talk about the issues? How easy is it to make a one-to-one resource transfer between the specialist sector and the mainstream sector? How are policy objectives achieved at reasonable cost? An understanding of those issues would help, because it is implicit that we will make judgments about that, and it would be better to have some expert opinion.

The Convener: I do not want to double up what I think that the Audit Committee will do on that issue. However, we might have a report about when that committee will deal with the matter. We can feed that committee's deliberations into our discussion.

Ms Alexander: The Audit Committee has a retrospective function of examining whether mistakes were made, but for us it is a first principles issue. If a class has 27 children, in future, four of them might have special needs, or in any one year the figure might be one, zero or five. We are fundamentally changing the basis of provision for large numbers of children. Forget mistakes that have been made—what are the resource choices that are implicit in the policy choices that we seek to make? We should not

outsource that to the Executive or say, "You make it work—there might be additional resource implications."

Normally, I would say that we should ask the Executive to send someone from the educational finance side, but because the Accounts Commission happens to have examined the matter recently, it would give us a more interesting perspective as part of our initial briefing from providers and parents' groups.

The Convener: What do people feel about that?

Fiona Hyslop: I agree, but we must be specific about what we consider. We should not replicate what happens on the Audit Committee. We are almost thinking through the Executive's analytical process and the issues that it had to address, as opposed to what it found. That is what Wendy Alexander is after.

Ms Alexander: Exactly.

The Convener: Do members have any other thoughts? We might develop some of those suggestions at the away day. The geographical spread of visits and types of project are matters to look into. Perhaps suggestions could go to the clerk in the meantime.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have one detailed point on funding for specialised support. The funding may be totally different depending on whether the pupils want a bit of extra support or a great deal of it. Sometimes civil servants think in terms of Rolls-Royce treatment, rather than what parents want, which is a bit of extra help.

Fiona Hyslop: I will follow up Ken Macintosh's point about speaking to parents and those who are concerned. One of the issues that has been raised with me as a constituency MSP is parents' feeling that they are excluded from official consultation, not least because of the ways in which public meetings were organised and communicated. It is important that the committee practises an inclusive approach in advertising that we are considering the issue, to ensure that people have access and are able to come to us to say that they have concerns, have something to offer and want to give evidence.

Another matter that has been brought to my attention is that local authorities have lists of children with special needs. That is obvious. Those lists should perhaps be used to indicate that the Parliament is considering the issue, as opposed to what happened in some areas during the official consultation on the proposed bill.

The Convener: You may remember that, when we were both on the Social Inclusion, Housing and Voluntary Sector Committee, it held one or two open meetings to which people of various sorts were brought along to chat through issues with the

assistance of one or two of the organisations in the field. There may be scope at some point for an event of that kind, at which we try to talk directly to parents, and which is not mediated through the role of official bodies of one sort or another. I am keen to do that.

Dr Murray: On visits, I presume that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education could advise us where there are examples of good practice that we might want to see.

The Convener: I think that the ministers are going on a programme of visits to, among others, places where practice in this area is particularly good. That gives us a framework to start on that aspect of the matter.

We are perhaps arriving at a scene where many people have emphasised discipline. I wonder if it is slightly wider than that. Without widening out entirely, it might include truancy and excluded children. Those are all connected issues, are they not? How are the mechanisms tied up on all of that? What are members' thoughts on that?

Dr Murray: It would be important to consider matters such as alternatives to exclusion and how children's behavioural problems are managed in different schools. That would not only be about the down side. We could also consider effective ways of dealing with those issues.

The Convener: A couple of weeks ago, I visited a school in Glasgow that has a particularly good record on dealing with such issues. There are clearly lessons to be learned from such practice.

Fiona Hyslop: The issue is more behaviour than discipline. Is that what we are talking about?

The Convener: We want to get a flavour of schools' strategies, to some extent, and of how we can influence the policy agenda. What do members consider to be the objective of an inquiry into that area, apart from informing us?

Ms Alexander: I would like to consider two matters to get us up to speed. One is a review of the changing policy context in the past 10 years. Over the past four years, the starting policy was to reduce exclusions in schools by a third. As I understand it, that is no longer one of the Executive's objectives. I would like us to undertake an historical review of the changing official policy towards discipline in schools over a decade.

The other interesting point, which will help us to avoid anecdote, is that the Accounts Commission publishes, as part of its local authority tables, the percentage of children who are excluded from schools. The Renfrewshire percentage, for example, is high. That probably reflects education authority policy decisions. There is no one-to-one correlation between deprivation, in any sense in

which we would understand it, and the level of school exclusions.

I would like an historical review of changes in policy and an explanation, whether from HMIE or the Accounts Commission, of how to understand the tables for Scotland and of what drives the different levels of exclusion between different authorities. That would be enormously helpful as part of the context setting at the beginning of an inquiry, before we get down to considering individual practice in individual schools. It would give us a sense of the big picture.

The Convener: Okay, we are moving towards having a briefing on that subject. I would have thought that, given what we have discussed, HMIE would have a useful input. Do you agree, Elaine?

Dr Murray: Yes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The convener wondered what we would be able to get out of an inquiry. I suggest that it would be examples of best practice. I visited a school that had teams of specialists for pupils with difficulties. Several of the children had been abused, and they had relatives in prison and other background difficulties. The specialists assessed each case and made proposals. That system worked well.

12:00

The Convener: Right. Do you need any more guidance, Martin?

Martin Verity: No. We have enough information from members' proposals and suggestions to prepare work for the start of the new term and to work up issues for the away day.

The Convener: Perhaps we could e-mail members with suggestions for visits, witnesses and so on to give a bit of flavour to the whole thing.

What we have decided will kick off the committee's next agenda. An away day has been proposed and we assume that it will take place. Can you remind me, Martin, where we got to on a date for the away day, because it was moved about slightly? Was it 2 September?

Martin Verity: The proposed dates for the away day are 19 and 20 August at the Stirling Management Centre.

The Convener: Do those dates suit members? I take it that there are no difficulties about time scales.

Fiona Hyslop: Do not change the dates now, please.

The Convener: Right. We can work up the away day's agenda to include members' suggestions. I think that a briefing paper has been

circulated to members, who should come back quickly to me if they want to add anything to the proposed scenario. We have invited the Minister for Education and Young People and the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People to come along for at least part of the proceedings and to have dinner with us on the same night—I hope that we will get an informal input from them as well.

Do members want to discuss anything else at this point? We will return later to the work programme, which will be influenced by what happens at the away day.

Dr Murray: I have a time-management issue. We have a list of potential dates for committee meetings, but no times. Is a time associated with the meetings?

The Convener: There is also another issue, which is the frequency of the meetings. I assume that we would routinely have weekly meetings, but I do not know whether that would meet the committee's desire. Frankly, I do not think that we will need weekly meetings because we will get through a reasonable agenda with fortnightly meetings. As regards time, I think that the predecessor committee met at 10 am or 10.30 am. Is that right, Martin?

Martin Verity: The predecessor committee met in the afternoon. Morning committees usually start at 10 o'clock, but the starting time is up to the committee.

The Convener: Is 10 o'clock acceptable?

Mr Macintosh: I have no problem with weekly meetings. I think that we will need to meet weekly when we get into dealing with legislation. However, I am not entirely sure that we should rush breathlessly into agreeing to meet weekly. If there is a need to meet weekly, we will do so. The danger is that if we set weekly meetings, we will fill them.

The Convener: It is reasonably certain that we will have plenty of material—at least in the short term—with which to fill the meetings.

Ms Alexander: I note that the committee members are long-standing members of the Parliament. Over the past 36 hours, I have noticed a perceptible shift of tone in the Parliament. I have been to three committee meetings in that time, all of which said that, although they met fortnightly in the previous session, they now want to meet weekly. That is certainly the case with the Finance Committee. In addition, there is the proposed change in the parliamentary business agenda for Thursday mornings. Now we are at risk of doing the same as other committees by proposing to have weekly meetings.

During this parliamentary week, I have attended four different committee meetings at which members have said that they want to expand the committee's timetable, whereas none have said that they want to contract it. I make that observation. We trust the clerks to schedule the meetings, but there is a perceptible shift towards saying that mainstream committees, such as the Finance Committee and the Education Committee, should meet weekly. At this point four years ago such committees met once a fortnight. There is a scope-creep in formal parliamentary business—and in the work of cross-party groups—to which we should be alert, because we cannot scope creep everything.

The Convener: There could be scope for modifying the proposed timetable. For example, if we go on a visit one week, we do not need to have a public meeting that week. That would balance things slightly, because it is true that a committee can get overburdened.

Fiona Hyslop: If there is a choice—I am aware that some members have further to travel than others—I would prefer longer meetings that started at 9.30 am and went on until lunch time. I would rather do that, and use the time properly, than rush into agreeing to have two-hour meetings every week. I do not want to get into that agenda.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have a question for the clerk. Does meeting every two weeks make it easier to book a room, rather than being in competition with other committees every week?

Martin Verity: The rooms have been booked for the committee, but it is up to the committee to decide whether it wants to meet on each of the weekly dates that has been booked.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If we withdrew some of the bookings, would we be more likely to be displaced for the rest?

Martin Verity: No. The committee is not required to meet on any of the booked dates, although the room is available.

Mr Macintosh: I like Fiona Hyslop's suggestion. I never stay over, so it makes no difference to me when meetings start. However, I would be happier if we met earlier. Therefore, I suggest that we meet every second week from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm. We would, of course, have the freedom to expand that.

The Convener: Can you fit that proposal, within a reasonable time scale, into what we have decided already, Martin, given that other things will be added?

Martin Verity: Yes, I think so. The committee also needs to be aware that it will be required to do some work on the budget proposals for this

year. However, there will certainly be enough time to do what the committee seems to be suggesting.

The Convener: I am aware that, if we have the weekly arrangement, there are six meeting slots before the October recess. If we reduced that to three fortnightly slots, I do not think that that would be enough, even if we had longer meetings. Perhaps we should have four or five meetings. The clerks could look at that matter—taking into account members' views—and come back to us.

Ms Alexander: If we used spare slots for visits, it could make it easier to get a turnout of members. I am increasingly aware that members have additional commitments on Mondays, which are becoming crowded. Members indicated that they would like to go on a visit that is associated with special needs. If the Wednesday slot were preserved for such a visit, we would be more likely to get it into our programme.

The Convener: If only a morning were available for visits, it would be tricky to go any distance.

Ms Alexander: We could go on visits within the central belt.

The Convener: Even central-belt visits—for example, to Glasgow—would have around an hour's travelling time each way. Of course, that might not be the case for members from Glasgow.

Mr Macintosh: If we went on visits on a Monday, members could keep Wednesday free for constituency business.

The Convener: There is parliamentary business on a Wednesday afternoon.

Ms Alexander: It seems crazy to schedule all this so far in advance. However, Fiona Hyslop made an important point about rural Scotland being different from urban Scotland. The logic of that, it seems to me, is that at some point during our consideration of the special needs bill—which might, indeed, be during its formal consideration if we do not manage a visit in September—we should visit a non-urban setting or a dispersed authority to see how special needs issues are dealt with in a small-school situation. Obviously, the approach to mainstreaming is necessarily different in such a context.

Similarly, discipline issues are handled differently in small communities. We should do one non-urban visit on learning issues and one on discipline issues. We should do one before Christmas and one after. However, only one of the visits should be outwith the central belt. We should try to establish a date for such a visit.

The Convener: The alternative is to do as we have done on other committees, which is to split the committee into smaller groups for specific visits. Our committee is not big, so it would be

more difficult to do that. Nevertheless, it could be workable for two members to go on a visit and come back with their impressions. We should develop that idea. The predecessor committee made a lot of use of reporters. We could appoint reporters to deal with petition issues and so on. I am keen to ensure that we have the potential for doing that kind of thing. Also, there is a need for the committee to get about the country and see different sorts of people and events. We need to be as accessible as we can.

We do not need decisions now on what we have discussed, but the suggestions and proposals are helpful as flavour. We can perhaps develop at the away day much of what we have discussed. I thank members for their attendance.

Meeting closed at 12:09.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, 375 High Street, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Friday 4 July 2003

Members who want reprints of their speeches (within one month of the date of publication) may obtain request forms and further details from the Central Distribution Office, the Document Supply Centre or the Official Report.

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

DAILY EDITIONS

Single copies: £5

Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT, compiled by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, contains details of past and forthcoming business and of the work of committees and gives general information on legislation and other parliamentary activity.

Single copies: £3.75

Special issue price: £5

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Standing orders will be accepted at the Document Supply Centre.

Published in Edinburgh by The Stationery Office Limited and available from:

The Stationery Office Bookshop
71 Lothian Road
Edinburgh EH3 9AZ
0131 228 4181 Fax 0131 622 7017

The Stationery Office Bookshops at:
123 Kingsway, London WC2B 6PQ
Tel 020 7242 6393 Fax 020 7242 6394
68-69 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AD
Tel 0121 236 9696 Fax 0121 236 9699
33 Wine Street, Bristol BS1 2BQ
Tel 01179 264306 Fax 01179 294515
9-21 Princess Street, Manchester M60 8AS
Tel 0161 834 7201 Fax 0161 833 0634
16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD
Tel 028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401
The Stationery Office Oriel Bookshop,
18-19 High Street, Cardiff CF12BZ
Tel 029 2039 5548 Fax 029 2038 4347

The Stationery Office Scottish Parliament Documentation
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information
on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament,
their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0870 606 5566

Fax orders
0870 606 5588

The Scottish Parliament Shop
George IV Bridge
EH99 1SP
Telephone orders 0131 348 5412

RNID Typetalk calls welcome on
18001 0131 348 5412
Textphone 0131 348 3415

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

www.scottish.parliament.uk

Accredited Agents
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers