EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 18 May 2005

Session 2

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE
8th Meeting 2005, Session 2

CONVENER

*Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)

DEPUTY CONVENER

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con)
Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP)
Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Victoria Aldridge (Moray House School of Education)
Mark Challinor (Professional Association of Teachers)
David Eaglesham (Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association)
Don Ledingham (Dunbar Grammar School)
George MacBride (Educational Institute of Scotland)
Dr Judith McClure (St George's School for Girls)
Bryan McLachlan (Netherlee Primary School)
Victor Topping (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Mark Roberts

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Education Committee

Wednesday 18 May 2005

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:04*]

Pupil Motivation Inquiry

The Convener (Robert Brown): Good morning. Welcome to this meeting of the Education Committee. We are in public session, so I ask people to ensure that their mobile phones are switched off.

Item 1 on the agenda is oral evidence for the pupil motivation inquiry that the committee is conducting. We have had an opportunity to make a number of visits to schools and projects in different parts of Scotland, especially Perth, North Lanarkshire and Glasgow. Yesterday we held a round-table event for individual teachers, which was interesting.

Today we start our programme of oral evidence. We will hear from two panels of witnesses. The first consists of representatives of the teaching unions. The second is a panel of primary and secondary teachers.

On the first panel, I welcome George MacBride, the convener of the education committee of the Educational Institute of Scotland; Victor Topping, the executive member for Scotland of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers in Scotland, which is quite a mouthful; Mark Challinor, professional officer of the Professional Association of Teachers; and David Eaglesham, general secretary of the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association.

We have the submissions with which you have been kind enough to provide us. Given the number of witnesses on today's panels, we will not ask you to reiterate your written evidence in an opening statement and will move straight to questions. I am conscious that with a panel of four there is a danger of repetition, so committee and panel members will have to be reasonably disciplined. If you have nothing new to add, do not add it, but if you have, do so. We want to get the full flavour of what you have to say to us this morning.

I will kick off with a general question regarding the evenness of provision across Scotland. We have received a number of incidental reports from schools about the different ways in which pilot projects are conducted. We hear about funding for a particular project or initiative. Do panel members believe that generally there is equality of provision to schools across Scotland in respect of issues of pupil motivation, support, work-school links and so on? Is patchiness of provision an issue?

George MacBride (Educational Institute of Scotland): There is patchiness, but to some extent that is to be expected. Different education authorities, sometimes with the Executive's support and sometimes on their own initiative, are trying out a number of projects, so one might expect there to be variation across the country. We must also recognise that problems of lack of motivation and disaffection—which are not quite the same thing—vary across the country. The incidence of disaffection is likely to be higher in some communities than in others.

The EIS welcomes a number of initiatives that the Executive is taking to increase the number of teachers in Scotland, which should lead to more equal provision across the country. However, we also offer a word of caution. We are concerned that sometimes funds that are directed at specific purposes do not reach them at education authority or school level. We understand the reasons for that, but we believe that the Executive should track and monitor such initiatives carefully.

David Eaglesham (Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association): George MacBride is absolutely correct to say that there is unevenness of approach. However, to some extent that is to be encouraged, because there is no single solution or magic bullet that will work throughout the country. What is happening school by school and authority by authority is appropriate to the school or authority concerned. We should encourage that. Wholly devolved processes are most appropriate in this context.

There will be problems in ensuring that there is equality of funding. The committee and the Parliament can try to ensure that the distribution of funds is broadly equitable, even if there are different patterns and funding is not absolutely the same everywhere. We do not want one imposed solution from Holyrood or elsewhere that tells people how to motivate pupils. That would not work, because it would be based on a false premise.

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): We had an interesting session with Alan McLean about disaffection. It is clear that lack of motivation is not the same as disengagement and that self-esteem is not the same as motivation—the analysis must be much more complex than that. You have spoken about different patterns of disaffection. There are clearly disaffected young people who are troublesome or undisciplined and who disrupt the learning of others. There are young people who simply do not turn up at school and there are others who turn up but do not participate in the school in any way. Young people in the second group do not cause problems, but they will not

achieve what they could achieve if they were engaged and motivated.

One of the pieces of evidence that we took suggested that it is self-evident when a child becomes disengaged from education. Ideally, what does a teacher do in those circumstances? What scope is there for a teacher to get involved? Do they have the time to identify the issues?

Mark Challinor (Professional Association of Teachers): The key seems to be to find out the cause of the disaffection, although I know that that might seem an obvious statement. A teacher certainly cannot directly change the socioeconomic environment or the levels of employment or crime. If the pupil's disaffection or disengagement is caused by a non-mainstream learning style, however, a good teacher can adjust their teaching and learning strategies to suit.

I admit that, like many things, although it is possible to fine tune to a degree, there are stops at the ends of the scale. In higher education, which is my background, teaching and learning strategies can make a huge difference to individuals' performance. If we start with the premise that every individual is unique and work from there, that seems to be the answer to some problems, although clearly not all.

Dr Murray: Is it easy to adopt such an approach in the current education climate? Do teachers have the space, time and support to do that?

George MacBride: We are comparatively fortunate in Scotland—I stress the word "comparatively"—given the greater flexibility that is now being afforded to teachers, schools and education authorities to work out their own solutions, which is a helpful way forward. A growing number of support assistants are now being employed, although we also want more teachers to be employed and deployed to support youngsters.

We can draw on a range of assessment methodologies—I am talking about summative assessment at the end of the school career. We can draw on standard grade and the new national qualifications. The continuing work on formative assessment and the type of work to which Alan McLean has referred, on developing classrooms where youngsters are empowered to have more control over their learning, do not represent a panacea and will not affect everybody at the same moment. However, there is now more space for doing such work than there was 15 years ago, when we were driven by league tables and a more competitive environment.

Dr Murray: Do you think that the styles and patterns of disaffection are different between boys and girls? It is not possible to generalise completely about the two genders, but are there different trends in disaffection among boys and girls?

George MacBride: I think that there are. One should never generalise and apply that generalisation to individual young people—or, indeed, to people of any age—but there is clear evidence that boys take up a lot more time than girls in discipline systems. Far more boys than girls are excluded from school. I am not sure whether there are differences between boys' and girls' patterns of attendance, but I suspect that there are. There is evidence that some girls who are disengaged will turn up at school but will not do anything and will not contribute.

Dr Murray: So disaffected girls might be less troublesome and their disaffection will therefore be less obvious, although they will still not be achieving.

George MacBride: Yes.

Dr Murray: Disaffection is a difficult thing to measure, but how common is it? How many pupils in secondary school, or at least at the later stages of secondary school—at the ages of 14 to 16, for example—are not engaged with their education?

David Eaglesham: If I may, I will take a step back from that question and respond to your earlier point. There is no "bag full" indicator for young people as there is on a vacuum cleaner; there is no light that comes on and says "now disaffected". A professional judgment has to be made by the teacher. The more aware teachers are of the issues, the better they will be equipped to deal with them. That is a matter of training, but, by and large, teachers make such judgments effectively.

The second stage of the process relates to what can be done about that disaffection. Who has the responsibility for dealing with it? That is where the wholesale dismantling of the guidance system comes in. If that happens, the next line of resort, the trained professional guidance teacher, will not be available to deal with the problems. That would be a major problem for us.

Timing has been mentioned. Many schools are moving towards the idea that everyone is a guidance teacher. It is suggested that we can dismantle some of the promoted posts in order to free up money and that individual teachers can carry out guidance teachers' duties. That will simply not work, because teachers will not have the time to take on those other duties. They will not be able to do them as well as the guidance teachers because of the time constraints.

If the young person's issues are not identified, passed on and handled through the appropriate channels, that young person will just drift away. We will see them enter a gradual decline and head

down the slope to being totally disengaged. The reality is that, if the pupil does not come to school, we can do nothing about them. We can have all the methodology and highly qualified teachers in the world, but they cannot affect people who will not turn up in the building. That is the key to the whole situation.

There are different patterns for boys and girls, as the puberty process kicks in in different ways. Boys tend to be disaffected for quite a long while but then, as they pass through puberty and begin to get a grasp on things, they tend to re-engage. Girls tend to be more engaged for longer. However, in my teaching experience I have noticed that there is a stage at the end of second year, going into third year, when girls in particular begin to decide whether they think that it is worth connecting with the education process any more.

Some of the brightest and most able young women that I have seen have simply switched off at some point and said, "This is not really relevant to me." That is the problem—society did not make it evident to them that they had to get into education and stick with it. Some of the young women whom I have met in recent years have done magnificently and stuck through it even with really difficult home situations where their parents encouraged them not to work. Unfortunately, however, those young women are in the minority.

10:15

The Convener: I want to get a handle on the time that you are talking about—puberty and all that. The traditional view of disaffection is that it happens in secondary schools and that things are fine in primaries, where disaffection is not a problem. However, there have been some hints that either that was never the case or the situation is changing and similar issues are arising in primary schools. Will you comment on when the process starts and what it is all about?

George MacBride: There is evidence of disaffection among some youngsters in primary school. In a small number of cases, there are even examples in primaries 1 and 2 of youngsters who are simply not attending school and whose parents do not find themselves able to encourage their attendance despite considerable support. Interesting work has been done in Glasgow on nurture groups to support such youngsters and to develop practice. At the other end of primary school, there is clear evidence that a number of young people are moving into patterns of behaviour—both inside the school and in their local communities—that are likely to lead them towards disaffection. Whether that is a new or a growing problem, or a problem that has always existed but we have tended to ignore, I am not sure, but there is no doubt that there is a genuine problem.

The Convener: David Eaglesham made a point about identifying the problem and taking action. Is that done more easily in primary school where one teacher sees the child all the time, as opposed to in secondary, where those relationships are all a bit more fragmented?

George MacBride: The brief answer to that is yes.

Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP): Following on from that point, I was interested in what George MacBride said about nurture groups, which I have visited in Glasgow. There seems to be a high incidence of young children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. During our inquiry, many teachers have said things like, "Wee Johnny there needed some attention way back in nursery school." That refers to the question of early intervention and trying to tackle the problems as early as possible. To what extent does that currently happen? To what extent is there a follow-through from primary into secondary school? To what extent are teachers at secondary school briefed on the individual children who come through from primary? Let us start with that theme and perhaps develop it.

David Eaglesham: That goes back to my point about the guidance or pastoral system—what you describe is channelled through that and inappropriate information is filtered out by the professionals, who will say, "The teacher does not need to know that bit of information, but they need to know the background and what will affect how the child acts in class." For example, domestic and other personal circumstances might affect how the child acts. Liaison between guidance colleagues in the secondary school and teachers and head teachers in primary school in particular has been effective in that respect.

Going back to my earlier point, we are talking about starting intervention very early, which is appropriate for some people. However, a big worry relates to those people who are absolutely in the main stream—totally in the middle of the flow all the way through the process—until a point when they begin to see that that is not worth the candle.

Society used to take the view that education was a passport to success for everyone and that a railway worker's son could become Lord Chancellor. That used to be a no-brainer. However, it has become less obvious to people that education is the passport to success. With high unemployment, people have thought, "Well, maybe education is not quite as good a thing as we thought." We have to emphasise to people that education is not optional but absolutely essential. It is not something to be trifled with. We have to

get that message across collectively. If we do not do that at an early stage, people will not believe that they really need to dig in and make the best of it.

Mark Challinor: We have to be careful about separating children of whatever age who have become disaffected because they have particular problems—such as learning difficulties, problems at home or problems in difficult communities—from children who are more mainstream, within the normal bell-shaped distribution, but who simply do not understand their role in society, do not understand their role as a citizen and perhaps do not understand society's importance for them.

For many children, learning about citizenship may be a way of re-engaging. For example, we have to explain why a manual worker or a skilled worker is just as important as a lawyer, a doctor or a teacher. That may be obvious, but people are not learning it. There is a disparity of esteem, which is perhaps felt most by the people who feel disfranchised.

There have been noises from Westminster recently about the number of citizenship teachers; I think that there are 200 new teachers this year. That is a woeful lack of effort when we think that citizenship is at the core of our existence.

Mr Ingram: You have spoken about people's disaffection after experiencing the system. On the subject of trying to encourage young people in school, the EIS says in its submission:

"Ethos and relationships are as important as the formal curriculum."

The SSTA talks about the need for pupils to be self-motivated and about the need for the education system to inculcate that idea rather than always leaving the teachers to try to motivate pupils. Is the issue about developing individual relationships with children? Do we need more teachers, smaller classes and a different teaching style? Will you expand on your points about ethos and relationships?

George MacBride: Individual relationships are important and we argue strongly that smaller classes contribute to such relationships. However, it would be quite possible to have smaller classes but not very much in the way of a change of ethos. One has to consider the ethos of the whole school and to establish what we would call an ethos of respect. By that I mean respect for all members of the school community—respect for the young people, respect for the school staff, respect for the parents and respect for the people in the wider community with whom the school works.

Establishing that respect is difficult. Professionals who work together will come from different backgrounds but will have the same intentions. However, sometimes they will have had different training and sometimes they will have different expectations. Sometimes, too, different legal obligations will be placed on them. The evidence from new community schools is that people can work together but that the process is slow to develop.

Developing ethos in a school requires clear and consistent messages from the whole school, including the school management. I am not talking about soft or easy options. It is hard and draining on people to be always positive and supportive but, at the same time, to be setting clear boundaries across which young people should not pass.

Schools have done a huge amount of work in establishing ethos, but a difficulty for them has been the general media climate, in which young people are demonised in lurid stories. I am not denying that, in a community with difficult young people, life can be extremely hard for everyone, but we should not demonise all young people as hoodlums. The language of some politicians has fed that media frenzy and that is regrettable.

David Eaglesham: I always go back to Jean Brodie in these situations. The word "education" comes from the Latin words "e ducere", which means "to lead out", not "in trudo", which means "I thrust in". The trouble is that the balance in the system has been altered by the qualifications issue. I am not saying that we should not have qualifications and that we should have free schooling in which people do what they like; it is essential that certain skills are acquired and certain processes are understood. However, we tend to miss out the inspirational and challenging quality of education.

We have to accept that the next generation of young people is better than the generation of their teachers—that is inherently so and it is our job to make sure that that is the case. They are given the tools, but they are also inspired and challenged to move on a bit further than they would have done otherwise. That is the key, if we can get the process going. If young people do not turn up, we cannot motivate or inspire them, but it is absolutely crucial that we do so.

We have to get the balance right between emphasising the curriculum and qualifications and emphasising the challenges that we set for young people. If we could free up the curriculum and have more space for more extensive challenges, young people would respond to that. There is a world out there and, if we do not give young people the opportunities to show us what they can do, we will narrow their experiences down to the strictures that we experienced. That would not serve society or young people.

We need to make sure that the balance is right without going to the absolute of free schooling and saying, "Do what you like—there is no requirement to study anything." Children have to be literate and numerate and they have to understand certain things, but we tend to emphasise the curriculum too much. That is one of the dangers; we might stifle some young people, who might blossom only once they get beyond school, when they have more freedom to do so.

Mr Ingram: The pressure on the system has been to improve the attainment of qualifications. Although we do not want to compromise pupils' attainment, because that affects their life chances, how do we move from where we are just now to the type of system that you are talking about?

David Eaglesham: The curriculum review provides us with the opportunity to make sure that the process works and delivers the kind of skills that young people need to acquire in one way or another. If my understanding of how the process is working is correct, it will be possible to achieve a range of things—we do not necessarily have to say that, because something is a mathematical issue, it must be done in mathematics; it is possible to achieve a result in another context as well as in mathematics. We would not have the obligatory view of many of those items in the curriculum. There is no single step; what I am talking about is the starting point on a journey that we will have to take.

George MacBride: One of the interesting features of the curriculum review group's report, which ministers accepted, was the idea that education should be challenging and enjoyable. One would think that that was a given, but sometimes, as youngsters move towards examinations, the experience is less than enjoyable. The curriculum review process and the decluttering of the primary and early secondary years should be helpful and should allow teachers more space in which to pursue their interests in their areas of expertise, as well as young people's interests.

We start from a strong base. Attainment levels in Scotland are high. We know that because of international comparison and because attainment in national qualifications has risen over the years. We should all bear in mind the fact that we start from a strong basis of attainment. We are not starting with a semi-literate, semi-numerate school population; we are starting with highly articulate, well-taught youngsters whose skills are already at a high level. That is not to say that there is not a considerable number of youngsters in some places about whom we should be concerned. However, we have to acknowledge that we have solid foundations.

The Convener: I am struck by how far that view is from the position of the Professional Association of Teachers, whose submission states:

"it is now much easier for pupils to do well in exams".

Does Mr Topping have any comment on that? Sorry, I am blaming the wrong person. Does Mr Challinor have any comment on that?

10:30

Mark Challinor: This may not be a complete answer, but we approach the issue perhaps from a slightly more helicoptered view. Tweaking the curriculum and talking about high levels of achievement is fine—it is both laudable and necessary—but, to our mind, providing a curriculum that meets the child's needs without convincing the child that they should avail themselves of it may be efficient but not necessarily effective at the end of the day. Our view remains that the child must be helped to understand why it is necessary to learn and to understand the context in which learning takes place. We would say that we need to operationalise the learning experience.

Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP): As Robert Brown mentioned at the beginning, yesterday we had an interesting and worthwhile meeting with a panel of teachers. One theme that emerged strongly from that was praise for the community schools project, although there was concern about its funding and roll-out. How valuable are the interagency working and home links that have been put in place in such schools? Should we continue to push those forward? Will such developments ultimately help to address the social deprivation that is suffered by young people in communities, which I think has been highlighted by you all? Are community schools a road forward to tackle that by promoting interagency and parental involvement?

George MacBride: Yes, community schools are one of the roads forward. Before developing my answer on that, I should point out that education cannot solve all the problems of inequality and social deprivation. Clearly—although this is outwith the powers that are available at the Scottish level—action needs to be taken to lead to less income inequality and less poverty and to give all people a more equal access to resources. Arguably, that is part of having an inclusive society. However, such powers are largely outwith our scope today.

We believe that the sort of work that is being done in the new integrated community schools is a way forward because it not only sets up patterns of working with parents and with the local community but brings health workers and social workers into schools and allows support to be

targeted to individual pupils. Outwith the formal new community schools, there are also several important initiatives in which people are working with a wide range of agencies, including restorative justice agencies and the police. Such initiatives are always labour intensive, which tends to mean that they are expensive. Regrettably, all too often funding is made available only on a temporary basis, so people must devote a lot of time to rebidding for funds rather than to getting on with the day-to-day work. We suggest that the funding of such developments should be built into the core funding of schools and education authorities.

Ms Byrne: We also heard yesterday that, when funds are available for community involvement, shortages of community workers and social workers sometimes mean that it cannot be provided—such involvement is often not possible even when the funding is available. Have you come across that issue?

George MacBride: That has been an issue in the past but, as a teacher in Glasgow, I have the impression that the situation is improving.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): I thank the witnesses for their written evidence, which is, although frank and brutal at times, helpful because it addresses some fundamental points. The best motivation is self-motivation; I want to bring us back to that fundamental context. The SSTA submission states quite boldly:

"The education system in Scotland is not designed to support the development of independent, democratic and responsible citizens because it has removed all responsibility for learning and teaching from pupils and teachers."

The submission from the Professional Association of Teachers comments:

"There is no emphasis on the benefit of education for its own sake and the wider good of society. It is much more 'How can this be of direct benefit to me?' and if this is not seen then its importance is seriously affected."

That is a fairly fundamental point about the why of education, so the comment is very damning. If society is losing its sense of the purpose of education, tools might be available for remedial activity, but how should we address that fundamental shift in the understanding of the importance of education for its own sake?

David Eaglesham: It is essential that we move away from the league-table approach to everything, which measures things that we are not really trying to find out. There is no league table for achievement in French in Scotland, but people try to make out that we must have a system that identifies a hierarchy of people who can speak French. The ability to speak French is useful and might be a great asset to people in certain aspects of their life, but as long as we focus on such performance measures rather than on what is almost the ability to challenge the system, we are going wrong.

George MacBride was absolutely right: in Scotland the base of learning and knowledge is very high. Our starting point is not a system in which there is no compulsory primary education, as is the case in other countries; it is much higher and we should consider what we can do from that starting point. Young people will experience huge change in their lifetimes—the pace of change is accelerating all the time—and they will face challenges that we cannot begin to imagine. How can we equip them for that? Perhaps learning French, mathematics or other subjects will be part of the answer for some people, but the reality is that critical thinking, problem solving and people management will be much more important than what we currently do. Young people will still need the basics and we must try to strike a balance between not dropping everything and presenting them with challenges. If we challenge them, they will surprise us. They might almost terrify us—they should terrify us. We should be afraid of them in the best possible sense because of what they might achieve, which might go well beyond the bounds that we might reasonably have set for that thinking process.

The approach might be scary, but it is the one that we need to take. We need to make young people aware of what they are doing. We cannot say to a child in primary 2, "You must revolutionise society"; a child of that age must understand the basics. However, a young person at secondary school who is approaching higher education should be well aware that they have a vital role to play in society and will not be just a bystander or add-on. The appointment of the children's tsar is a good indication of Parliament's view: the matter is so important that a person has been appointed to look after the interests of children and young people in a specific way—as indeed the committee does in its work.

Young people need to know that they are empowered and that they are our masters rather than our servants. We will guide them and present them with challenges but, unfortunately, there is no higher examination in that subject; Anton Colella cannot say, "Yes, you'll sit that exam on Tuesday." The situation is much more complex than that. However, we have to foster that way of thinking because if we do not, we will fall behind and become a little Ruritania in which we know all about irregular verbs but cannot respond to the real challenges that the world sets us. It is not impossible to achieve; it is relatively easy, because young people will guide us through the process, but we need to facilitate it for them.

Mark Challinor: The PAT agrees but—moving on—if we give a child something at which he or she can excel and then recognise that they have excelled, surely that is the greatest motivator. It is true that if we categorise people as being good at mathematics, modern languages, geography or whatever, a number of children will fall between the gaps. The problem is that we live in a free market economy and people who are good, but do not excel, at poetry and art will not make a living from such things. Perhaps we do not sufficiently recognise those talents and allow children to develop self-esteem through such media. I do not know the answer, but we have to move away from the league-table approach and give every child something in relation to which they can feel proud of themselves. That is what leads to self-motivation; people are motivated when what they are good at is recognised as being good or excellent. I do not know how we do that.

Fiona Hyslop: What do the witnesses think about the attainment versus achievement agenda? The matter relates to the discussion about league tables and how outcomes are driving our approach. Perhaps "outcome" is the right word in business-speak, but if we are developing an agenda for lifelong learning, surely the process is as important as the outcome. There is no point in having a content-driven approach if people forget what they learned the day after they learned it and are not equipped for the future. What can be done practically to develop the achievement agenda in a way that is not patronising but is useful for young people? Will the drive of the curriculum review make skills, rather than content, the way forward? What will be the pace of change? My concern is that we are losing generations as we speak and analyse.

George MacBride: Several steps that are being taken in the system will allow us to make progress. The first step, which was a useful initiative, was to take on board the idea of formative assessment through the assessment is for learning programme. That has several aspects, one of which is improving content learning—improving attainment by having more control over learning.

Much more important than that is the fundamental point that such assessment encourages a dialogue between the teacher and the learner on the best ways in which the learner learns. That is repetitive—I am sorry. Such assessment encourages that dialogue, builds up a common vocabulary and allows one to develop strategies that the young person can take on and use. The dialogue that is involved in formative assessment is crucial. That initiative is well embedded, not in every school, but in many schools, and will extend to all schools in the next couple of years.

The curriculum review started after the assessment is for learning programme began. The review has set out clear markers that the curriculum should not be content driven but should instead focus on skills and dispositions and that dispositions may be as important as skills. The curriculum review process will ask people hard questions about whether what they teach contributes to young people's lifelong learning, makes young people effective contributors to society, helps them to become responsible citizens and makes them successful learners and confident individuals. People at all levels—in classrooms, schools, education authorities and nationally—will have to examine what we teach young people. That work is in hand.

Some people will feel that the pace of change is excessively fast. An important issue is that teachers must take on change while doing the maintenance job with the youngsters who are in front of them, which is a huge demand on teachers, so I hope that we will not lose the impetus for change.

Fiona Hyslop: If we are individualising learning and we want to give control back to pupils and teachers, much will depend on personal learning plans. Do we have the time for them? Head teachers tell us that they do not have the resources to implement personal learning plans.

We hear much about emotional intelligence, which is as important for teachers as it is for pupils. What is it? How is it being used and developed? In the private sector 10 years ago, I used individual learning styles, but we hear that some schools are only starting to implement them now. You are concerned that the pace of change under the curriculum review is fast, but it seems to be slow. Will the panel address some of those issues?

George MacBride: I did not mean to imply that the pace of change was too fast. I said that I hoped that we would not lose the impetus for change. Change makes huge demands on teachers, but the pace of change will require to be fairly fast.

It is important not to think in terms of personal learning plans, because that ends up in bureaucracy and piles of paper—or their electronic equivalent—through people sitting down to tick boxes. We must have a dialogue with young people, who are learners in schools. There is no question but that that is time consuming, but we must consider ways to do it. David Eaglesham referred to the role of guidance and pastoral care in secondary schools in that respect. We must dedicate time to the process, whether in the classroom or through other means in schools.

The development of emotional intelligence relates to the ethos of wishing to develop young people's and adults' understanding of how they impact on others, and encouraging them to take more control of and responsibility for that, which is a slow long-term process.

I am not sure whether simple panaceas and labels exist. One must talk about changing much practice. To achieve that, schools are being afforded considerable support, on top of staff development support. Resourcing issues will arise, but several streams are available. Local authorities are working on emotional intelligence, on restorative justice, which deals with similar issues, and on emotional audits. Education authorities are working with Alan McLean, who has spoken to the committee. A wealth of good practice exists—the difficulty is in spreading it.

Fiona Hyslop: Does anyone want to comment on spreading of the good practice that exists?

10:45

David Eaglesham: There are plenty of examples of that. Authorities are keen to say what they are doing and individual schools are eager to display their skills. The question is whether the message is transmitted effectively; it might be put out, but it is not necessarily received. There is a danger that the message might just disappear into the ether. The Executive can play a vital role in ensuring that word goes down the line not about the theoretical model, but about what works in practice.

I want to follow up on what George MacBride said about PLPs and so on. We must avoid bureaucratic solutions; if we adopt a tick-box approach we will drown in bureaucracy. If we try to impose the old soviet style of management on an emerging process it simply will not work. There is an inherent risk of problems and there is no guarantee that we can have 100 per cent coverage. It is probably better to take that risk and to rely on the professionalism of the staff to ensure that people are not left behind, or to identify people who are in danger of being left behind and to work with them, than it is to aspire to having the complete manual.

The amount of bureaucracy in schools is becoming ridiculous. The system of reporting to parents is developing into a farce because of the amount of time that is being spent on the mechanics of it rather than on telling a parent of a child who is at school in Linlithgow—for example—what is happening with their child, which is what we need to be doing. We must ensure that that message gets across. Unfortunately, teachers and parents are both wasting their time on the reporting system at the moment. It is a good example of how we need to make progress and to think about better ways of dealing with communication. Reporting to parents is vital—it is helpful and formative, but the current system is not working—it is becoming a bureaucratic nightmare.

There is a significant danger that if we liberalise the additional support for learning system a bit but still try to retain a controlling element, we will replicate the reporting situation and end up in a mess. We will all be castigating one other by saying, "Well, it was your fault for not doing such-and-such at this time." That will be no help to anyone, least of all young people.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): I have four quick questions. I want to ask Mr Victor Topping about differentiated lessons. In the light of the inclusion agenda, are the demands that are made on teachers to provide relevant differentiated lessons to the pupils in their classes realistic or unrealistic?

Victor Topping (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers): Given the number of pupils in a class and the number of different levels of those pupils, it can be difficult to differentiate between them sufficiently. One can certainly differentiate in the work that one does with a class. I do that—I work at two or three different levels with my class, but there are times when it would be desirable to have more differentiation and to work at five, six or seven different levels. I do not have the time or the resources to differentiate fully.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Class sizes have a lot to do with that.

Victor Topping: A teacher might prepare separate work for individual pupils, so class size is not as much of an issue as the different levels of the pupils within a class.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Thank you.

My next question is for Mr Mark Challinor. To what extent are parental expectations of a child's achievements and behaviour the prime influence on motivation? What is the importance of home links?

Mark Challinor: I can tell you what I think, but I cannot generalise. Parental attitude must be one of the drivers of a child's motivation, but one can envisage a situation in which a child was positively motivated by parental behaviour that was quite negative and non-supportive. Some children simply succeed in spite of certain factors, whereas some children fail because they are not properly supported. I am sorry if that is an incomplete answer, but I do not think that there is a straight answer to the first part of your question. Will you repeat the second part of your question?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Do you think that more should be done to raise awareness of the importance of home links?

Mark Challinor: Yes, I do.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I would like to ask Mr David Eaglesham—

The Convener: Before we leave that issue, can we get a feel for what should be done about parental links? It is easy to say that, in principle, they are important, but how can we re-engage some of the disaffected parents about whom we have talked?

Mark Challinor: I will give a quote from one of our members—I do not know whether she was quoting someone else—who said, "It takes a whole village to educate a child." I think that she was coming at the issue from the angle that a community influences the individuals within that community. It is difficult to understand why links with schools and community colleges are necessary—I do not know where to start. Perhaps we should consider sections within a community who might be willing to give of their time. The individuals who comprise that section might make individual contributions. It is well worth spending money on that. Other than that, I cannot help you.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: How can the improved engagement that is often observed as a result of positive and stimulating experiences outside the classroom, such as outdoor challenges, be used to improve a child's interest in classroom subjects? In other words, how can new-found enthusiasms be transferred into the classroom?

David Eaglesham: I challenge the first part of your premise—such experiences do not necessarily have to happen outdoors. They might well happen outdoors, but it is not automatic that outdoor education will be reflected in the classroom. The reverse could be true, in that what happens in the classroom could create an interest in what happens outside. It is a two-way street.

The current problem is the nature of the curriculum and the divisions that it creates. To return to the curriculum review, it is a matter of trying to see pathways through the curriculum, so that someone who shows an aptitude for, or an interest in, a subject outside can develop it within an academic subject in school. Biology might provide the best illustration. If a pupil does something by way of fieldwork that sparks their interest, they can develop it further in the classroom.

Given the Scottish climate, it is not appropriate to be out of doors all the time, although it is healthy to do so from time to time. Organisationally, it is also difficult to be outdoors all the time. Realistically, entire schools will not be out and about all the time. Work has to be focused in buildings and classrooms. However, I accept that the link is difficult to make. We need to look at the pathways to education for people who think, "Only if I'm outside school does this reflect anything for me." Is there some other way that they can be educated within the system that would allow them to develop more effectively?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have a question for Mr MacBride on the weight of administrative work. We have heard from David Eaglesham that the level of bureaucracy is ridiculous. Is that your evidence on behalf of your union? Would reducing the time that teachers have to spend on bureaucracy and administrative work be of great help in assisting pupil motivation?

George MacBride: Yes, undoubtedly it would. One of the teaching profession's hopes for the 21st century agreement was that there would be a reduction in the amount of bureaucracy that teachers must deal with. Employment of various forms of support staff in schools across the country has contributed to that, but we still have a long way to go. We also have to be aware that there are always new demands for bureaucracy. Just when you think you have dealt with one issue, another issue demands more paperwork. That causes concern.

Ms Byrne: I will return to differentiation. Are young people being treated as individuals and are their individual needs being met? I agree that class sizes need to be smaller to do that. How would you deal with different ability levels in the one classroom? Surely primary teachers are experts at working with individuals in a classroom, differentiating between them, doing group work and so on. Given smaller class sizes in secondary schools, bi-level teaching and group and individual teaching would not be impossible. What is Victor Topping's view on that?

Victor Topping: I will speak from experience. I am a science teacher with a first-year class in which pupils have reading levels that range from level A to level F. Within that one class I must follow a science syllabus and teach scientific concepts and scientific facts, which is difficult with that range of reading levels. I get some special educational needs help for one period a week with that class, but it can be very hard work trying to deal with all the abilities in the class, given the reading ages and the breadth of concepts that we are trying to teach.

Ms Byrne: What is George MacBride's view on that?

George MacBride: The evidence from primary schools is that to have flexible groupings in the classroom, including when the whole class is

being taught, is useful. I would be loth to label children in a way that would mean that, because they are operating at a certain level, they will always be doing something different from a child who is operating at another level.

Pupils are grouped for specific purposes in primary schools because youngsters who have a certain level of attainment in reading might have a different level of attainment in mathematics. Some primary schools have adopted models of settings that operate across two or three classes. We have to realise that information and communications technology affords a number of ways forward. Some of that can be about skills development; there is sophisticated software that will allocate children appropriate levels of number and literacy work. Furthermore, ICT is able to assist children who have specific difficulties by enabling them to use voice-operated word processors and so on. It can also be used to help children who have visual impairments. That area needs further resourcing and consideration of who takes responsibility for ICT in the school and how we can ensure that youngsters take responsibility in a practical way for their learning.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): The NASUWT submission says:

"Pupils are of course not motivated when they are presented with work in school which is too difficult for them."

However, the PAT's submission says:

"You only have to speak to experienced teachers to confirm that it is now much easier for pupils to do well in exams".

It goes on to say that pupils ask themselves:

"As it is easier to do well, why try as hard in the first place?"

I ask Mark Challinor whether school is easier or more difficult than it used to be. Are we challenging our pupils sufficiently at the moment?

Mark Challinor: Many of our members are of an age group that takes a traditional view of qualifications. Many of them feel that the skills that are required to achieve high grades now are not the skills that pertained when they were teaching in the main stream. I would echo that. Continual assessment and the ability to resubmit assessed work to get a higher grade might well take away from pupils the skills that people of my generation developed because, having learned for a year, we were assessed through an A level exam of two or three hours' length.

However, I think that those views should be tempered by the fact that we are looking for different skills and learning outcomes today than were sought 20 years ago. I am giving you my view as a PAT official rather than as a member, but I think that you are not comparing like with like and that the comparison is, possibly, odious.

Mr Macintosh: Which comparison is odious? Do you mean a comparison between the situation today and the situation in the past or the comparison between the PAT's submission and the NASUWT's?

Mark Challinor: I am entitled to my view as a teacher, although I am a university teacher rather than a school teacher. It could be that children today are leaving school with some skills that my generation lacks and that we have some skills that they lack. I am not willing to say which is better because I do not know.

Mr Macintosh: I am just trying to clarify the point because we are dealing with evidence, whether it is written or oral.

I take it that we are agreed that it is important to challenge pupils. Is the PAT saying that we are not challenging them sufficiently and that the attainment culture that we have means that it is too easy for pupils to do well?

Mark Challinor: That is the implication of our response, yes.

The Convener: I must confess that I have some difficulty here. The written evidence that has been given by the PAT seems to be different from the oral evidence that we are hearing today. I do not know whether I am picking that up correctly.

Mark Challinor: I can toe the party line, in which case there is not a lot of point in my answering your questions. As I said, my response was given as a PAT official rather than as a member. Sometimes, the members and the officials differ.

Mr Macintosh: I am simply trying to clarify the position. Are you saying that, despite our attainment and achievement-based system, some of our children are not being sufficiently challenged?

11:00

Mark Challinor: Some children could achieve what look like respectable grades in, for example, highers, but come out not necessarily well equipped with the analytical skills to apply the techniques to a non-related subject.

Mr Macintosh: I will ask the NASUWT the question that I think everyone has asked its representatives. The NASUWT submission asks:

"Do we need to stream pupils … ?"

You are obviously suggesting that that could be the way forward. I am sorry, but I get confused between streaming and setting so, for my benefit, can you explain the difference between streaming

and setting before you expand on whether you think we need to stream pupils?

Victor Topping: I refer to the statement in my submission about pupils attempting work that is too difficult for them. I am referring to classes where it is necessary to follow a syllabus. As a science teacher, I know that the entire unit on microbiology in the five-to-14 curriculum consists of level E and level F objectives. The unit is far too difficult for poorer pupils. If there were streaming or broad band setting, we could set up a totally different piece of work for pupils of a lower ability, rather than try to do work with them that is far too difficult because it is at a much higher level.

Mr Macintosh: Would you do that within one classroom? Would there be mixed ability groups within one classroom in your science class? Would you separate the class into different sets and progress the curriculum at different speeds, which would obviously present a lot of challenges for the teacher, or would you separate pupils into different chemistry 1, chemistry 2 and chemistry 3 classes?

Victor Topping: This year in my school we will broad band set second-year pupils for the first time. We will have nine second-year sections, which will come to the school as three groups. Within those three groups the pupils will be set broadly; the better pupils will be in larger classes and the less able pupils will be in smaller ones. Within each class the teacher will differentiate slightly. We hope that that will improve the achievement of our S2 pupils in the coming session.

Mr Macintosh: Is there evidence to suggest that that has a motivational effect? Does putting pupils of the same ability into roughly the same area improve their motivation? Does that inspire them?

Victor Topping: Some pupils will have the chance to become the top dog in the class who would not have been able to do that before in totally mixed ability sections.

Mr Macintosh: Is the approach accepted broadly or is it still controversial?

Victor Topping: I think that quite a few schools take such an approach.

Mr Macintosh: The SSTA submission mentions

"Successful arrangements for teaching … specifically targeting the disaffected rather than assuming that the disaffected are part of the amorphous badly behaved group."

The written submissions indicate that there is a clear difference between pupils who lack motivation and pupils who are disruptive. Is it helpful in a teaching context—and perhaps in a policy context for the Executive—to make that differentiation and to approach the motivation of disruptive and the badly behaved pupils completely differently from the motivation of disengaged pupils?

David Eaglesham: There is some overlap when the disaffected become the disruptive. They find that that is the alternative channel for them. We need to be as flexible as we can in looking at individuals or small groups and considering how we can execute plans for them. Otherwise, we are in danger of trying to impose one solution on all and saying, "This is the solution for discipline and therefore it will affect all pupils." Such a solution might turn off those who would feel depressed by heavy-handedness in the classroom. At the same time, if there is a light touch and progress is not being made, that does no service to the pupils either. Differentiating between the pupils is part of the complex task that exists in the classroom. It is necessary to consider all the factors.

One of the important issues is to establish what outcomes we are looking for. If, as Victor Topping was saying, we are thirled to a particular outcome—or a common destination—that everyone has got to get to, that is a problem. If we accept that some pupils will achieve differently on that scale but will progress in other ways, we can say, "That is fine, that pupil is moving in the correct direction." Even though their outcome on the academic side is less than other pupils, it is acceptable because they are being moved in the right direction. They can learn to learn and they can make progress. Even once they have left school, they can still make progress. If, on the other hand, a uniform system were to be imposed, that progress would come to a dead end at some point.

The Convener: Does George MacBride have a different view?

George MacBride: There is a difference between being demotivated and being disaffected. I would include in "the disaffected" those youngsters who are totally turned off school and who simply do not go to school, or who to a large extent truant from school, as well as those who are disruptive within the classroom or within the boundaries of the school. There is a danger that, for powerful reasons, we take action to deal with only those youngsters who are disruptive, because they are in your face and it is not very nice having them in your face; whether it is positive or negative action that is taken, it is nonetheless action. I would be concerned if because, for understandable reasons, dealing with those youngsters is a priority, the needs of youngsters who opt out of the school system and who to a large extent vanish from the school system, especially during the later years of secondary education, were ignored. We have to focus carefully on them. It has long been a major

concern of the EIS that some youngsters simply disappear from the education system.

Mr Macintosh: All the teaching unions have flagged up the difficulties that are faced by teachers in the classroom because of disruptive pupils. The Executive has responded—whether it has done so sufficiently may be debated—and a lot of work has gone into tackling discipline issues. Has enough gone into tackling motivational issues? There are some pupils for whom discipline is not a problem but who are just demotivated. Do you get signals from the Executive, or from policy makers generally, that teachers will be supported in working with demotivated or disengaged pupils? Such pupils are not causing teachers a problem but are just not engaging with the education process.

George MacBride: There are a number of means by which that can be addressed. One obvious means—about which we have our concerns—is to undertake a proper analysis of attainment figures. I do not mean the crude league-table approach. In a proper analysis of the figures, people look at how youngsters are doing within their own subject, and at the areas of strength and weakness. Are there demotivated groups? Are boys doing better than girls or vice versa? Are more able pupils doing better comparatively than less able pupils?

A second approach, which a number of authorities have built up, is to recognise that it will probably be difficult to get youngsters back into school full-time. Some authorities are therefore working with voluntary organisations to develop part-time attendance models. In Glasgow, there is the school's out model for youngsters who refuse to go to school, which uses ICT to give tutorial support at home. People are working on the problem, but nevertheless the pupils who grab the headlines are those who are disruptive.

Mr Macintosh: You have said several times that we ought to avoid a one-size-fits-all model—no one would disagree with that. The EIS submission identified a number of areas where positive policy initiatives are taking place, such as the loosening of the curriculum and the "reprofessionalisation of teaching"—that is a nice phrase. Later evidence may talk about the importance of leadership and so on. None of those initiatives, which are all supported by the Executive, would be classified as one-size-fits-all initiatives. They are all a variation of policy. Is enough being done either specifically on motivation, or generally across all those Executive policy initiatives, to address motivation in schools and, more than anything else, to reward good teaching? It is clear from all the submissions that good motivation is about motivating teachers. Are we doing enough to reward motivated teachers?

David Eaglesham: The answer to both questions is probably no, not enough. However, we are at least thinking about those issues. Rather than simply looking at the mechanics of the process, we are taking a more holistic approach. One of the advantages of the system that we have now is that this committee is here to do that. We have an Education Department and a Minister for Education and Young People. There is scope there for considering those issues in more detail and for asking the why questions and not the what questions. As long as we keep doing that, we will be on the right track. These things are never simple, but we are moving in the right direction.

That said, if you asked us whether we could think of two more initiatives, we would say yes and send them to you by return tomorrow. If more money is available, we will accept it. We are on the right road, but that does not mean that we say, "That is fine; we've done that now," tick the box and move on to something else. We need to keep the organic process going, and I think that that is the right mindset at this stage. If we find that, 10 years later, we have not moved on, we should criticise ourselves for failing in that respect.

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): Some of the submissions express despair at modern culture and at certain experiences with youngsters in today's society. Was there a time when teachers did not express any despair?

David Eaglesham: Yes—it was in 1942, I think.

Mr McAveety: I am worried that a number of submissions—particularly the NASUWT's submission, some of which I take substantial issue with—express despair about the trends in modern culture. Perhaps Victor Topping could give me a wee sense of how he arrived at his conclusions. Can we get ourselves out of this despair by learning lessons from other countries that might not have the same cultural influences as Scotland?

Victor Topping: Those comments in my submission are personal and arise from incidents that I have observed or have been involved in and incidents that fellow members of the association have reported to me. We have seen groups of teenagers going about at night and primary school kids running about with alcopops. When someone tried to break the windows of my house, I went out to them and threatened to call the police. However, I was told that they would not arrive for 45 minutes. Indeed, the police came 45 minutes later, and they warned me that I should not have gone out, because if the people in question had made a complaint, I would have been charged. Perhaps I should not have put such personal experiences in my submission.

Mr McAveety: Some of us who have benefited from being teachers have taught in what by any standard would be defined as very difficult areas of Scotland. Indeed, the areas that I taught in threw up certain challenges, but my memories—and I must admit that I have been out of teaching for at least six or seven years—are very positive. People worked to ensure that those kids were given the opportunity to develop. I should also point out that many committee members have come from similar backgrounds and have managed to overcome such obvious difficulties in their lives.

We simply want to find out the factors that do not allow many more pupils to break through. Many of us have had great chances and opportunities and I am sure that we all have snapshots of a life that we might not have achieved because our personal or social circumstances were not advantageous. How do we reduce those obstacles and maximise opportunities for many more youngsters?

As I have said, I come from a teaching background and know how difficult teaching can be, but I am worried about this despair. If we listened to the stories that teachers sit round trading with one another, we would not leave our houses at night. Life is complex and we have to face up to these issues. Ordinary teachers in schools have told us that when they focus on things and believe that agencies such as the school, the local authority and the wider community endorse what they do, they can make a hell of a difference to youngsters. How do we make that approach available to the whole of Scotland rather than in lots of different places?

George MacBride: I strongly suggest that our written submission does not quite share the sense of despair that you mentioned. We need to address a number of issues, one of which is the media, which do young people no service whatever. Similarly, the remarks of some leading politicians in the United Kingdom do youngsters no service.

We must recognise that peer pressure is important for some young people, and that it can be positive and negative. Indeed, some aspects that we take to be negative might well be seen by youngsters as very positive. I always recall with great admiration a 13-year-old girl who, as part of a gang, "accidentally" kicked over boys' cans of lager so that they could not drink in the park. I thought that that was a sign of civic determination. Sadly, the girl failed at school—she became disaffected with it and left.

11:15

Mr McAveety asked what makes the difference in individual cases and what allows people to break through and what holds them back. Such questions intrigue me. One of the best legacies that schools can give to young people is a commitment and understanding that they can go on and learn later in life, whether they have failed or succeeded in school. In Scotland, we have developed a wide range of routes by which people can re-enter education in order to re-enter economic life or simply so that they can take more control of their personal life. When young people leave school, they must have a positive feeling, even if they have not done well academically for whatever reason.

David Eaglesham: I would not want members to be left with the impression that Frank McAveety's description is how teachers see themselves. I started my teaching career in Govan and my experience there is one of the most rewarding experiences that I have ever had. Some of the worst rogues in the land were there, but there were wonderful kids whom I still remember and who still remember me and what we did together when they see me. There is huge potential there, and dealing with such potential is one of the most rewarding things about being a teacher.

There is now a qualitative difference. Compared with the days that Frank McAveety mentioned—I saw Wendy Alexander nodding about the process—there is now much more competition for young people. In our day, going down the chip shop was almost the limit of a person's ambitions, but nowadays the world of the internet, the media and a whole alternative culture are out there and are being offered to young people. Getting into the Timothy Leary thing—turning on, tuning in and dropping out—and forgetting about all the rest of it is easy, as that is seen as being in the real world. People will plug in their computers, get on to the internet and that will be their world, but there is a danger that we will lose a whole chunk of young people's society as a result. We should try to counter that and all the other pressures that exist. There is an easy avenue for people to drop into now, and doing so is perhaps much easier than it was for our generation. We must guard against that. The pressures and the dangers are much greater than they were, but the challenge of engaging these people remains the same. They will achieve wonderful things that we cannot yet even begin to imagine. The future will be wonderful in their hands, but we must give them a start.

Mr McAveety: I want to look beyond our shores. Do you have much research evidence on international comparisons or areas in the world in which people have addressed such complex questions, which relate to globalisation, media influence and so on? How can people change how

they organise what they do in schools to achieve the results that we all hope for?

David Eaglesham: Finland seems to have the answers to everything and the system there seems to be the best possible system. Teachers are paid moderate wages, but teaching is the big demand profession. Everyone wants to get into teaching, achievement levels are high and there is huge parental backing of the system. Finland is a small, northern European country that was formerly agricultural, but it takes great pride in education and it went comprehensive in the 1970s. Finland seems to be one of the big successes if we accept that studies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development programme for international student assessment are the absolute measures of such things—that is not necessarily the case, but that is one indicator.

In Finland, there are hot meals at lunch times and there is huge consensus in communities about how education should be run. At national level, major policy decisions are taken in Helsinki and decisions are devolved to municipalities—one could think about decisions being taken in Holyrood and then in Alloa and Wick. There is huge consensus that decisions should be taken at the local level and people, including parents, are deeply involved in the system. The difference is that there is a vast commitment to education, which we have not managed to achieve yet. We are not talking about a country that is radically different in many ways. Finland is further north than Scotland and its climate is even less hospitable than ours. Therefore, there is no reason why we cannot achieve such things.

There is much greater consensus among parents, pupils and teachers in other Scandinavian countries. When I visited Denmark, I went for a walk with my host, who was a teacher in the local middle school. She met parents and discussed with them on the street exactly what was happening with their children. If necessary, parents could phone her at home, as the school handbook contained all the staff phone numbers. If a parent had a concern, it was normal and natural for them simply to phone up a teacher. I am not advocating that as the policy of the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association, but it reflects a different consensus around education. We need to consider such matters. We do not need to consider radically changing our system, but we must ask how we can achieve such consensus and ensure that we do not waste our time on arbitrary administrative processes. We should consider how to communicate the relevant information in a meaningful way for all the parties that are involved, including the country as a whole.

The Convener: What you said about home telephone number sounds like a sacking matter for you.

George MacBride: In Glasgow, the development of learning communities in which secondary schools and associated primary schools work together is an interesting model that it would be useful to implement. I am not just saying that that in itself is good, which it is; Glasgow City Council has taken a clear policy decision that one of the aims is to allow strategic decisions to be made at an appropriate level and to allow the people on the ground—social workers, the police, health service workers and teachers—to work together with individual pupils. It is intended to remove some of the bureaucracy. A colleague once told me that they had never realised that joint working meant sitting round committee tables all the time, which it has come to mean for many youngsters. The helpful model in Glasgow allows the people with expertise—the practitioners in the classroom and in the social work department—to work together to support youngsters while the management work is done further up the system.

The Convener: I want to finish by asking about teacher training, which I began with. I refer to motivational techniques, which we have talked about on and off. We heard yesterday about a teacher who had been told about new techniques that totally altered their ability to engage with children. Is good practice being spread effectively throughout Scotland, or is there scope for a significant amount of professional development and additional training for teachers?

George MacBride: There is scope for significantly more of that. The professional review arrangements by which teachers sit down annually and discuss their professional needs has, over the past couple of years, been driven by the school development or improvement planning process. It would be interesting if at least some of it were tied to the standards for registration, which might allow teachers to consider their practices as well as management issues. That would be a useful step to take.

David Eaglesham: We are going to see a sea change in the profession in the next 10 years. The graph of the age structure of the profession is hugely distended to the top end. Within 10 years up to 60 per cent of people in the profession will no longer be serving in it. This is an opportunity to ensure that the techniques that teachers are shown in initial teacher training and subsequent training are appropriate to the demands that we are talking about making. Given the age structure of the profession, we have an opportunity to ensure that such training is endemic. We have moved away firmly from any suggestion of a rote

learning process, of which there was an element in my training. Teachers have done that, but there is now the opportunity to enshrine that sort of training in the next five to 10 years.

The Convener: We will draw this evidence session to an end on that note. Thank you for your time, which was helpful to the committee. We will take a brief two or three-minute break and will resume as quickly as we can.

11:23

Meeting suspended.

11:29

On resuming—

The Convener: Right, we will kick off again. I am conscious that time is moving on. I welcome our second panel of witnesses. Victoria Aldridge is a teaching fellow at the Moray House school of education; Dr Judith McClure is the head teacher of St George's School for Girls in Edinburgh; Bryan McLachlan is a principal teacher at Netherlee Primary School in East Renfrewshire; and Don Ledingham is the head teacher of Dunbar Grammar School. Welcome to you all. It might be helpful to the committee if you could say a couple of words—I mean almost literally that—about your individual background, without giving us a life story.

Victoria Aldridge (Moray House School of Education): This year I was seconded from Roseburn Primary School to work as a development officer. I am developing work in environmental studies for part of the curriculum and am taking the work that I have produced out to 11 schools throughout Edinburgh, so I work in 11 schools.

Dr Judith McClure (St George's School for Girls): I started off in teaching as a pupil-teacher in 1964 when I was 18—it was round about the reign of Queen Victoria—and I have been involved in teaching in schools and universities ever since. I have been a head teacher for 18 years and am in my second headship.

Don Ledingham (Dunbar Grammar School): When I meet people, I introduce myself as a teacher. I am proud to be a teacher. I have taught for 25 years and I have been the head teacher at Dunbar Grammar School for four and a half years. I have had experience in seven different schools, in three of which I have been on the senior management team.

The Convener: I recall that you have a professional background in physical education.

Don Ledingham: I have, yes.

Bryan McLachlan (Netherlee Primary School): I am one of five principal teachers at Netherlee Primary School in East Renfrewshire. I have been teaching for eight years, seven of which have been spent at that school. My main remit involves teaching a primary 7 class. In addition, I teach religious and moral education, equality and information and communications technology, which is an area of particular interest to me.

The Convener: The focus of our questions might be a bit different, as it will be on such issues as educational leadership and teacher motivation. I ask Frank McAveety to kick off.

Mr McAveety: As we go around Scotland, every one of us has the opportunity to visit schools. When we go into schools, we sense the leadership—or leaderships, because the totality of what makes a school work is the staff, and non-teaching staff can be as critically important as the head teacher. What kind of shifts can be made by good leaderships? That seems to be the subject of some emerging educational theory. For example, what are the common measures that would be put in place by the leadership if the people involved inherited a school that was in difficulties or which exhibited weaknesses? They do some common things, and I have my views about what those three or four things are. I would like your views on how leadership can be used effectively to make effective schools and effective learning environments for kids to feel motivated in.

Dr McClure: It is crucial, first of all, to get the teachers together and to have common aims and a strategy. The first aim has to be to do the best possible for every pupil, and the leadership must work with the teachers and the support staff: it is our school. As soon as those people are brought together with a common purpose, the next step is to make the pupils feel very much part of that and that the school exists to serve them. That message is the same, whatever the size of the school and wherever it is.

Pupils must feel that they are the important people and that the school exists for them. That will be achieved only through collaborative leadership, and to get that, the leadership of the head teacher is critical. They have to empower other people to lead, and to do that they must feel strongly about it. That is why the leadership agenda offers us all a tremendous opportunity. We are getting hold of that opportunity and we have high ambitions for every pupil. We really have to get stuck in there and make it happen.

Don Ledingham: I totally agree with Judith McClure. If there is a keyword for head teachers or management teams, it is trust. They have to deliver. If we are to say, "This is what our school is going to be and this is how we are going to

behave", staff have to trust staff, and students have to trust staff. That means consistency, although that is sometimes incredibly difficult to achieve under extreme circumstances when staff are pressurised to move away from their principles.

As I said, the key factor in a successful school is trust. Everyone must behave as they say that they are going to behave. When that happens, a sense of community starts to develop—what we describe as a sense of family—and a dynamic is created in which change can take place.

Unfortunately, many people are influenced by their experiences in the past, and teachers are no different. We have talked a lot about teachers who are towards the end of their career, and many people find it offensive to suggest that they can no longer do the business and that, once we get rid of them, things will be better. I seem to remember that we had a 70 per cent changeover in the profession in the 1970s, but we are now saying that we need to get rid of the people who came in then. We must realise that there are people in the job who want to do the business, who want to be led and who want to work with their colleagues. If we trust teachers as professionals, we will really start to see a difference. We are talking about a long-term process—change does not happen immediately—but, in my experience and in the experience of other people who have adopted that approach, it can be exceptionally rewarding.

The Convener: Bryan McLachlan may have a different perspective on the issue.

Bryan McLachlan: I agree totally with what has been said. As I prepared this morning, I realised that motivation largely comes down to the ethos in a school, which comes from the school's leadership. There must be a huge element of trust and respect, not only among the staff, but among the children. The school exists for the benefit of the children. I am fortunate to work in a school in which there is a positive, hard-working ethos, which rubs off not only on the staff, but on the children.

Victoria Aldridge: As a development officer, I have visited 11 schools throughout Edinburgh this year and therefore have an insight into how different schools are managed and formed. I have found from visiting classrooms that, in schools in which the staff have a sense of belonging and togetherness and a welcoming ethos, the children tend to be more motivated.

Mr McAveety: Those were all helpful comments. Victoria Aldridge said that she sensed a difference in perspective in the 11 schools that she visits. I do not ask her to identify the schools, but what barriers exist in the schools that are not as successful?

Victoria Aldridge: The barriers often stem from the schools' social surroundings. That is an initial problem in motivating pupils, which was talked about earlier. If the staff do not feel part of a team and if there are aggravation and emotional upsets among the staff, that can have an effect on the overall feel of the school and on the pupils. It is hard to say what the barriers are, as I simply visited the schools, but the social status of a school's area can be a barrier.

Mr McAveety: A problem that I have encountered both as a teacher and as an MSP is that people always find reasons why they cannot do things—they say that they cannot change a situation because that is just the way that it is, perhaps because of the social composition of the neighbourhood or the nature of the families in the locality. How do we overcome that barrier? Surely, as teachers or educationists, we must believe that we can shift at least some of that.

Don Ledingham: The biggest issue that faces schools is that of challenging the critical mass—that is often a problem with staff in the first instance, but it is also a problem with students. Every school has a critical mass, which is where it is in relation to the line of optimism or pessimism. All too often, the critical mass is negative. At that point, one must consider which individuals are influencing the situation and why they have learned that negative behaviour. That can often be tracked down to how management have treated those people in the past. Head teachers come in, introduce new initiatives then—bang, bang—they move on and the teacher is still standing there saying, "I knew it wouldn't work." People learn certain behaviours.

Similarly, there is a critical mass among students. We need to explore that and challenge it head on. However, when the critical mass starts to change among staff and students, the school starts to invent a culture that reinvents itself, is sustainable and is not dependent on one individual.

Dr McClure: I agree entirely with that. When a negative culture exists, time is the barrier. We have to be able to spend time with individuals—colleagues and pupils. We have to confront difficulties, because we cannot brush them under the carpet. If a teacher is not performing, we have to find out what is going on, provide the right support and understand their family background and the difficulties that they are having, but that takes time.

I spend the day feeling guilty—I am sure that Don Ledingham feels exactly the same—because I cannot spend enough time with every individual every day. That is the most difficult thing. When you have high ambitions and you want it to work, you know that you have to relate to people to

make things happen and to make them face their problems honestly.

The Convener: I have a fairly obvious question on leadership by head teachers and senior teaching staff. It does not necessarily come with being a teacher, does it? There is an intangible extra element that good head teachers bring. How can we expand that? Frank McAveety is right to say that you can go into schools and smell the difference between successful ones and ones that are not so successful; the same applies to businesses. That does not happen by accident. I appreciate that a lot of people contribute, but the view and expertise of the head teacher in making that happen must be important. Are we doing enough to provide support and training and to identify talent, so that the people whom we want are in place in as many schools as possible?

Don Ledingham: I introduced myself as a teacher. There is a tremendous correlation between being a good teacher and being a good manager in a school. Far too often, a mystique develops that successful school management is in some way different. Some people in school management characterise themselves as being different, but that is a serious mistake. The characteristics of an outstanding classroom teacher should be almost exactly the same as those of an outstanding head teacher, because you care about people, you set high standards, you challenge people and you try to create an ethos of belonging in the classroom. It is no different; you are just going from a microcosm to a macrocosm.

Mr Macintosh: It is interesting that you all talked about values in school, trust, respect, ethos, fairness and optimism. My question is for Don Ledingham. Do you think that inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and the document "How good is our school?" do enough to promote those attitudes? From a head's point of view, do the policy initiatives that you have to work to reflect the values that you want to see in school?

Don Ledingham: There are a couple of points. The approach in "How good is our school?" and that taken by HMIE is liberating schools—when they are prepared to take the opportunity. We were inspected in April, so I can speak from experience. We put systems in place to challenge ourselves in terms of exploring how well we are doing. The job of HMIE is to validate our systems.

The issue is trust, which Peter Peacock talks about a lot. We will have opportunities if we develop systems in which trust runs from the Executive to authorities and then to schools and from head teachers down to the classroom, and in which we believe that people are trying to do the best that they can and are developing systems that demonstrate accountability. You talked earlier about models elsewhere. It is important that we look elsewhere, but it is also important to recognise some of our own strengths and opportunities—if we have the courage to maintain the direction that we are taking.

Mr Macintosh: In our previous session, the trade unions referred to an overemphasis on attainment. There was an implied criticism that some of the targets that were set for schools corrupted the goals and did not encourage learning. Do you agree with that?

Don Ledingham: No. I can give you a simple example. We try to develop our attainment targets, not by pulling them out of thin air or asking, "What does the local authority want?" but by asking what each individual student is capable of and what they think they are capable of. When you look at targets from that point of view, you set the most optimistic targets that you can possibly imagine. They are far in excess of anything that any head teacher or local authority, or the Executive, would suggest placing on a school. Our job is to close the gap between a youngster's potential and their current level of attainment, which is a liberating exercise. However, if you feel that an attainment target has simply been handed down to you and that neither you nor the students have any ownership of it, that is negative. It is all about perception and interpretation.

11:45

Dr McClure: I agree. Targets exist in individual schools and changes will take place in individual schools. We will need confidence because we are embarking on a period of really quite exciting change. We are trying to meet the needs of pupils in a new way and we have a very good toolkit to allow us to do that, but we will need confidence because we will need to take calculated risks.

Don Ledingham and I, and people like us, want to do things that we feel will benefit our pupils. We will need people to understand us and help and support us, and not put us in the pillory—or give us the sense that we have been put in the pillory—if our ideas do not work. [*Interruption.*]

The Convener: Before we continue, is someone's mobile phone switched on? Something is interfering with the sound system. If someone has not switched their phone off, would they do so now?

Before we leave the topic that we were discussing, are there any more comments? Bryan McLachlan has a particular perspective from East Renfrewshire, which has had very good HMIE reports. It might be said to have a better catchment area than other authorities as well, although that may be a different issue.

Bryan McLachlan: Yes, the catchment area is a whole different issue.

I have no experience of what it is like to be inspected, although I suspect that the time is coming. I agree with my colleagues that inspections can work to a school's advantage. Among the staff where I work, there is great fear about next year, because we know that an inspection is coming. But I say, "Bring it on. Let us do it and let us do it properly. Let us confirm the good things that we are doing in our establishment."

I cannot stress enough the importance of the head teacher in taking the pressure off staff and in leading as they see fit. My colleague Don Ledingham spoke about people being brave enough to make decisions for their own school. In my experience, that is a very important quality in a head teacher.

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): In making recommendations, this committee will inevitably look for generic solutions for all of Scotland, in the hope of adding to what has already been achieved. Much emphasis has been put on leadership, but that is new: it is not something that we would have been talking about 20 years ago, 10 years ago or even five years ago.

We are coping with a legacy of a lack of trust. Having identified the importance of leadership, the witnesses seem to be thinking not only about how their schools can excel but about how this committee can help to grow that capability across Scotland. That might imply, for example, changes in the promotion structure for senior staff and in the evaluation of some members of our existing leadership cohort.

This is a newly recognised part of the agenda. What should we do to accelerate the spread of leadership capability and to move faster and further up the curve?

Dr McClure: It is critical that we back the process of building leadership capacity throughout the system. After young teachers have come through their training, it is possible to see their leadership capacity very early on, when they are still in their twenties. Those teachers need lots of support. We have to offer support to anyone who has any position of responsibility in a school. The point of leadership is to enable other people to lead, so we have to provide young teachers with as many opportunities as possible.

We probably have to move faster than we have been moving. Some initiatives are working very well, but they are not reaching out into the whole system. Everybody needs a chance. We have to give people the chance to get together to find ways of doing things.

Don Ledingham and I, and teachers like us, spend time together. We need to spend more time together, looking at the methods that we find useful in bringing on younger colleagues and establishing a more collegiate approach in our schools. That is key to everything that we want to happen.

Don Ledingham: I will risk an anecdote. My next-door neighbour works for IBM and is responsible for identifying talent across Europe. IBM tracks people from when they join the organisation after leaving university and ensures that they receive the correct preparation to enable them to become leaders in the next 10 or 20 years. We should consider doing that.

Our principal teacher of music has been teaching for only two years and I will be very disappointed if she is not a head teacher in 10 years' time. She has transformed her department through collaborative and inspirational leadership and she has increased the numbers taking music at standard grade from 12 to 62—in just two years, which is quite exceptional. There are teachers like her throughout the system and we should think about how we identify and support such people so that we do not leave to chance the question whether they will come through to be our leaders in future. Radical action will be needed to enable us to identify and evaluate potential. There is a question mark over the current employee review systems, which perhaps do not focus sufficiently on such matters. The current systems focus too much on allowing individuals to tell people what they want to do, rather than focusing on leadership potential. Perhaps people could opt into a voluntary system of appraisal if they were interested in management. We should urgently try to address the matter. It is a great joy to come across people who are in their mid or late 20s—or their 40s and 50s; it is not age specific—about whom I can say, "That person has it; they could be a head teacher." Currently, however, such people's capacity to succeed at interview is just left to chance.

The Convener: That is a crucial point.

Mr McAveety: It troubles me that the individuals who have such talent end up in certain schools by chance. If we are serious about shifting some of the big problems of underachieving schools, including schools that have good catchment areas and should achieve more, how can we ensure that the talented individuals get into those schools? Some schools are underachieving because they have been affected by the social transformation of the area in which they are located. If an area's population decreases, the school might not have the staffing complement or be able to offer the financial rewards that would encourage the head teacher or senior staff to remain in post. Senior

staff might leave a school that has only 500 pupils to work in a school that has 1,000 or 1,500 pupils. A perverse disincentive seems to operate.

Don Ledingham: I am not sure that I agree that there is a disincentive. We can find ways of liberating potential. The opportunities to take part in transfers and exchanges with countries such as Canada or Australia are well known, but we should let people take part in exchanges within Scotland. In East Lothian, we are developing a teacher exchange programme to enable people to do that. For example, in the next school session I will spend a week as a head teacher of a primary school in Musselburgh—I am terrified about it.

Mr McAveety: Are you terrified because you will be dealing with primary school children or because you will be in Musselburgh?

Don Ledingham: I am terrified because I will be exchanging places with an outstanding head teacher and I will be found out when she takes my job in Dunbar.

We need to identify, first, the problem, and then a solution-focused approach. I cannot give you answers immediately about what we should do, but I think that the problem could be solved in quite a liberating way, which would break down the idea that if someone works for a particular education authority they have no chance of moving. That would require the Executive to take an approach to leadership that permeated through the local authorities.

The Convener: There is a flurry of requests from members to ask supplementary questions. I am conscious of time, so I ask people to come in if they have key points on the matter that we are considering.

Fiona Hyslop: I want to ask the other witnesses whether the approach to career development and the identification of potential that Don Ledingham described is replicated in authorities throughout Scotland. Is there a more strategic approach in other parts of Scotland?

Bryan McLachlan: It is difficult to comment when one's experience is limited to the education authority in which one works. Don Ledingham said that sometimes it is only by chance that people who have potential are identified and I agree with him. I am in my 20s and I am in a promoted position in a primary school; I suspect that it would be difficult to prove that that did not happen by chance. However, in East Renfrewshire, where I work, many people who are in principal teacher positions are also in their 20s, which bodes well for the authority. Young people with potential are identified and I hope that their potential is encouraged and realised. We are given strong networks of help and support to bring us on as future leaders of schools. It would be unfair for me, however, to comment on other education authorities.

Fiona Hyslop: Of course. I was asking you for an overview, because I thought that you might be in a more protected position.

Dr McClure: Progress is patchy. Wonderful progress is being made by some authorities, which are doing great things by young teachers and young principal teachers. We have some wonderful documentation at our disposal, including continuing professional development for educational leaders and good material from HMIE on improving leadership in schools. As Don Ledingham said, if people are going to be leaders, they need to gain experience on the ground. There, they will see how problems are tackled and how people are inspired.

Don Ledingham also said that we need a whole-Scotland approach. The experience of HMIE could prove invaluable. The inspectorate has an unrivalled knowledge of what works in schools of all kinds. HMIE is currently working on leadership, but it does not have a lot of time at its disposal. For schools, it is not enough to be inspected once every seven years. An inspection is a wonderful mechanism for looking at a school in depth, transforming it and evaluating leadership throughout. If HMIE had more time to provide support, as well as to inspect, that could make a huge impact on leadership.

The Convener: You have a certain perspective on this subject wearing your other hat as chair of the Scottish Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society, or SELMAS. I am aware that you meet some of the top leaders through that organisation.

Dr McClure: Yes.

Victoria Aldridge: I agree with Judith McClure. In the city of Edinburgh, we have a good, established programme for supporting teachers who are embarking on a leadership role through CPD, supportive management and so on. There is space for that to be applied across the board throughout Scotland and to become a unified strategy.

The Convener: Let us return to Ken Macintosh, whose questions began all this. He has some other questions.

Mr Macintosh: The convener made some comments regarding East Renfrewshire, the status of Netherlee Primary School, where Bryan McLachlan teaches, the significance of having a good catchment area and so on. Netherlee is indeed in a very good area. East Renfrewshire is a small authority. There is good ethos, not just at schools such as Netherlee but throughout the authority, and that is very important.

The Convener: That is recognised in HMIE's recent report.

Mr Macintosh: Absolutely. That is well recognised. It is an important factor.

St George's is a high-achieving independent school. We have read written evidence to suggest that motivation is partly about teaching, partly about the pupil and partly about the home. Parents who choose St George's already exercise a degree of choice that will not apply to every school, but I imagine that Dr McClure will still experience motivational problems at the school. Will she describe how that is tackled? How do you motivate pupils in an academically based, high-achieving school where the parents are making a big investment in their children's education? How do you address motivational problems among children who you think could be achieving more or engaging more in the education process?

Dr McClure: As Don Ledingham says, it is a question of critical mass. When a lot of pupils really want to learn, life is a lot easier. However, we still get challenging behaviour, and lots of pupils have problems with their family background. Everyone has additional support needs at some stage in their life. The key is to realise from the start that, if we think we can do something, we will be able to do it. However, an awful lot of individual attention is needed to get to that point. That is particularly the case with women. In a girls' school, the pupils can be rather diffident and can lack the concept of self-efficacy.

Pupils need to be encouraged individually, and they need time as individuals. The great problem in all schools is being able to give pupils the individual time that they need to get over their feeling that they cannot do what is being asked of them, which is often why they feel disengaged in class and do not want to be asked a question or made to participate. To get beyond that, teachers need to spend time to discover why a pupil feels like that. The cause might be relationships or family or a raft of issues. As we all know, growing up is a hellishly difficult process. Individual attention and time are needed.

12:00

Mr Macintosh: How do you reward those who are not top of the class in a school in which being top of the class is everything?

Dr McClure: In fact, being top of the class is not everything. The big thing is not to compare people one with another; people's targets must be their own targets. Everyone in the community needs to feel valued and everything that they achieve ought to be supported. If everyone feels that, the issue is not simply whether someone is good academically but what they contribute to the community. If you have an ethos that says that that is what matters in the end, you can make a huge difference to people.

All subject areas provide skills for life, so it is terribly important that they are all held in the same esteem. We need to go for that in every school, because school is not simply about academic achievement but about the development of the whole individual. Don Ledingham said that a head teacher needs to be a person of trust, but that is what all human beings need to be. We need to be human beings first, so that is what must come first in school. Don and I are agreed that the school needs to create a community in which the individual is valued and can belong. That is the key.

Don Ledingham: I had the pleasure of visiting St George's on a couple of occasions, when we were trying to copy its tremendous action research programme. As a head teacher of a state school, my visits to St George's, with all its obvious privileges, were an interesting experience. However, the similarities between our two schools are much greater than the dissimilarities. We should aim at ensuring that we are ambitious—a word that might be overused now in the Scottish Executive—for our schools. Such ambitions can be common and can cut across the different backgrounds that operate within a school.

Ms Byrne: I am interested in exploring further what Judith McClure said about spending time with a pupil to provide individual attention to help the pupil's development. In their evidence, the EIS and SSTA representatives said that smaller class sizes would not solve the problem of pupil motivation, but they would go a long way towards helping pupils, because the teacher would be able to consider pupils' individual learning styles and work on qualities such as emotional intelligence. What are the panel's views on that aspect? The key is to engage with young people and to keep that engagement going no matter what kind of background they come from.

Also, David Eaglesham said that recent changes mean that the role of guidance staff in schools is diminishing. Will Don Ledingham say what impact that has on schools? How do head teachers manage to ensure that interaction between pupils and staff can still take place?

Dr McClure: The first thing is not the size of the class but the commitment of the teacher and whether the teacher has a burning desire to get to know every person in the class and to do all that can be done for them. There are loads of teachers like that throughout Scotland. If they can be given smaller class sizes, that will be much better. It really makes a difference if the teacher has time, because children need time, including time on their own outside the classroom. In practice,

teachers are asked to do far more than they are contracted to do, but they are prepared to do that in the right sort of community because they want what everyone else wants. Obviously, it depends on what is affordable, but lower class sizes help teachers considerably.

Don Ledingham: On guidance and management structures, as a school we wrote a paper last year for *The Times Educational Supplement* on the type of management structure that we wanted to develop. We said that we want to make best use of the expertise that we have and that we do not want to disrupt the culture that we are creating. We have a strong commitment to the idea that the main leaders and drivers of attainment in a school are the principal teachers and subject principal teachers. We argued against going down the curriculum leader and faculty route and we argued that we should retain our principal teacher of guidance. In that area, we are doing something interesting that parallels what happens in Europe. We have four principal teachers who are on the same level and pay and they rotate responsibility as the main leader of the department, with exceptionally positive results.

Ms Byrne: That is interesting.

Fiona Hyslop: That is like the system in France.

Don Ledingham: France, Germany and Denmark all have that system.

Ms Byrne: I understand that local authorities have different approaches to such systems. We are hearing from the likes of David Eaglesham that there are problems in some areas. Perhaps we need to re-examine the area from the Executive's point of view, to ensure that we have the correct number of people to work with young people in guidance, which is a key area, and that we have not lost sight of the need for that.

The Convener: What is your question, Rosemary?

Ms Byrne: Does the panel think that we should have a national policy rather than each local authority making its own decision?

Don Ledingham: I am a great one for saying that we should have an authority basis if it suits my purposes. It depends what you come up with. One of the advantages of the McCrone settlement is that it has afforded some flexibility in devolved school management, enabling schools to develop systems that suit their context. Something that suits us would not necessarily be suitable in another context. However, there are some key principles that need reinforcement and if people choose not to go down that route, they need to have a clear justification for why they have adopted a separate model.

In a way, we fly against the orthodoxy that gathered strength 18 months or so ago, which stated that schools should get rid of all their principal teachers and replace them with curriculum leaders.

Dr McClure: That is absolutely right. It is flexibility that we want. We should enunciate the core principles—which are that the welfare of students matters and that students deserve individual attention—but schools should be able to find the pattern that suits them best.

Mr Macintosh: My question is particularly for Bryan McLachlan and Victoria Aldridge. If you did not have good heads and good leadership at your schools, are the systems in place to support and reward you as teachers, in particular in relation to the policy initiatives and Executive guidelines under which you operate?

Bryan McLachlan: In a sense, it is difficult to answer the question because in my experience the leadership of my school has always been supportive. It is difficult to say whether the systems are in place.

Mr Macintosh: Are systems in place to pick up on demotivated teachers? Systems are there to reward good teaching, but are they also there to pick up on teachers who are not helping their pupils?

Bryan McLachlan: My initial answer to that is, "Possibly not," although perhaps I should not say that. In preparing to come here and in thinking about motivation in education, my first thought, which seems simplistic, was that we must have effective teachers. The most motivating or demotivating influence in any classroom is the teacher. They are the best resource that the children have. However, I am not sure whether support is available for those who are demotivated or whether that support is as evident as it should be.

Victoria Aldridge: The fact that a teacher is demotivated is likely to be picked up in their annual review, but it is a touchy subject. I agree with Bryan McLachlan that support mechanisms are not in place. Training is needed for management to help them to deal with teachers who are not motivated. How do we encourage them? How do we increase their ability to become good teachers?

The Convener: There can also be a prevailing staffroom ethos in a particular school, just as there can be a peer-group background for the children.

Bryan McLachlan: I was about to mention that very point. Sometimes, demotivation can spread rapidly. I suspect that that is a huge obstacle for the head teachers who are present. Of all the issues that head teachers have to embrace, that is

perhaps the most delicate and difficult one. I am not the best person to answer the question, but I suspect that that is the case.

Mr Macintosh: Changes have been put in place and chartered teachers have been introduced to improve what the EIS calls the reprofessionalisation of teaching, which is quite a good way of describing what we are engaged in doing. However, I worry that there are many methods to penalise and punish bad teaching and perhaps not enough to support or turn around demotivated teachers. Is that your experience or is that an inaccurate observation?

Victoria Aldridge: Strategies need to be more or less highlighted so that leaders can identify how they go about motivating a demotivated teacher. At the moment, it is hard to comment because I am in a similar position to Bryan McLachlan, in that there has always been a good management structure at the school from which I have been seconded. I have had only this past year to give me a brief view of what is happening.

When I go out to other schools, I notice that some teachers in the staffroom are demotivated. As Bryan McLachlan said, that spreads rapidly. A negative opinion is jumped on whereas a positive one is left to the side and that can become an issue.

Ms Alexander: I will pursue that point a bit more because it is a difficult area to talk about. Clearly, we are trying to boost overall teacher numbers and we are worried about the aging profile of the teaching cohort and the number of teachers who might leave. However, a large number of existing teachers will be there for a long time, so the challenge of how to motivate them is central to achieving system-wide objectives such as ensuring that there are more motivated teachers teaching more motivated children.

In almost any other walk of life, the two instruments that are used to motivate people are the creation of the right supportive climate and putting in place the right incentives. Unless we have people at the coalface who say, "These are the incentives that I would like to have available to me," how can we ensure that the teachers who are currently demotivated become sufficiently motivated to enable them to make the impact that we hope for? Are there any incentives that do not currently exist among the plethora of things that we are doing—through continuing professional development, reward systems and promotion structures—that would allow us to tackle the fifth of teachers in last year's survey who said that they felt demotivated? Will the package that I described or other incentives that are available make that fifth of teachers a much more insignificant minority over the next decade?

Dr McLure: Money is not so much the incentive; it is more a case of valuing the teacher and considering them as an individual, their situation in life and their professional development, then giving them opportunities to develop. We are beginning to see that happen now.

I feel, and I am sure that Don Ledingham would agree, that if a teacher were demotivated in my school, it would not be their fault; it would be mine. It would mean that I had not understood properly what was going on in the school that was not allowing them to do what they joined the profession to do. Teachers become teachers because they want to teach children and we must tap the roots of that.

If demotivation exists, we must face up to the reasons why a teacher is finding something stressful. One of the problems for all teachers is that it is not easy to be in front of classes of teenagers hour after hour, day after day. If they feel that they are not coping, it is often hard to admit that, or to admit that one does not have the measure of a particular child and is having difficulties.

We must create an open environment in which we all admit our difficulties and give people opportunities to have exchanges with other schools in Scotland and abroad. Not only head teachers but other teachers should get to go and see how wonderful things are in Finland. We must create that sort of atmosphere in teaching.

12:15

Ms Alexander: I am sure that many of the committee members admire your willingness to take ownership of the challenge of motivating the staff in your school. That must be a large part of the answer. There is little that the Education Committee or the Scottish Executive can do to help, because we are simply not part of the annual appraisal discussion. However, we want to be sure that, in the report that we write and the contribution that we make, we do not make the mistake of trying to overprescribe, but ensure that the full armoury of weapons and choices is available.

The Convener: What is your question, Wendy?

Ms Alexander: Have we given the witnesses enough opportunity to tell us what they do not have but wish they had at their disposal to ensure that their staff are motivated? I do not want an answer now; it is probably something for them to write to us on.

Don Ledingham: To get down to the quick, financial bonuses are not appropriate in this arena, as measurement becomes arbitrary and teachers start to work only towards a bonus. As I was

coming in this morning, I was listening to a discussion about the bonus system and commission in the selling of financial services, which was interesting. I agree that the head teacher needs to take responsibility. We need to understand why people are lacking in motivation. If the committee is looking for ideas to explore, an interesting one would be the possibility of giving head teachers short-term contracts but paying them a lot more. If I had a five-year contract, at the end of which you could get rid of me, you might need to tell me what has to happen. That is a bit radical, perhaps, but it is a suggestion.

The Convener: We will leave it floating in the air for the moment.

Fiona Hyslop: I was struck by the comment that teaching can be an isolated, lonely and intense job. Judith McClure talked about time for self-development and allowing teachers to build up experience throughout Scotland and Europe. That all requires time. I want to get a feel for the practicalities at the chalkface. What barriers are there to implementing the McCrone time and CPD opportunities? Our problem is that we tend to see the successful witnesses and hear about their successes, but we are trying to push beyond that to discover what could be extended elsewhere. We are not always looking for negatives; we are simply trying to get a perspective. How can individual teachers be supported and given development time? I find the idea of an annual review worrying if nothing happens for a year. Do teachers have sufficient continuous professional development time or do we need to take a hard look at how much time is spent on CPD, particularly if a new cohort is coming in? Is there a challenge with the generation that has not benefited as much from McCrone and the new management structures—the late 20s to early 30s age group—or are those concerns simply anecdotal?

Bryan McLachlan: At the beginning of your question, you mentioned the fact that teaching can be a lonely job and Judith McClure mentioned failing. I fail every day; that is the reality of teaching. You mentioned that you get the successful people to give evidence; in that case, I do not know how you got me. Teachers fail every day and the classroom can be a very lonely place for somebody who knows that they are failing as a teacher or who cannot get a grip on a particular child or class.

My experience is that CPD opportunities for teachers exist left, right and centre in East Renfrewshire. We can go on twilight courses, courses during the day, courses at the weekend and courses for this, that and the next thing. However, I sometimes wonder how much direct support is in place to pick up a teacher who is failing. Do you understand the point that I am making?

Judith McClure also mentioned the importance of openness. School ethos is important in that regard. If a teacher goes to their head teacher and says, “I’m not coping here,” the structures should be in place to pick them up. When a teacher is not coping, they become demotivated and that has a knock-on effect on the children in front of them. As the discussion has evolved this morning, the question has come into my mind again and again of how to get a grip on teachers who feel that they are not coping for whatever reason.

In my short career, there have been times when I have felt that I was not coping. I have had to drag myself up and ensure that I get back on track. I also know that when I go back into school tomorrow, I might still come across a situation that I will not cope with well. Structures must be put in place to deal with that sort of situation.

Essentially, we are talking about leadership and the need for good head teachers and senior management teams who recognise the times that teachers are demotivated, pick them up again and get to the root of the problem. I completely agree with the evidence that says that teaching can be a lonely profession. Teachers fail all the time and, when that happens, we need to feel that there is openness and to be given support to lift us up again.

Early in the discussion, Judith McClure said that she can spend a whole day feeling guilty because she does not have time to get round her staff. That is the reality of the situation. Although we have 750 children at Netherlee and 50 members of staff, it can still be a lonely place. Even if there are a lot of bodies in the building, you feel that you can come and go and not really be tapped into—if you understand what I mean by that. Similarly, I have 33 kids in front of me every day and I can spend the whole day feeling guilty because I do not have the time to get round every one of them. I hope that that answers the question.

Fiona Hyslop: How do you find the time to help to identify the issues?

Don Ledingham: We really need to be out there, talking to people before they come knocking on the door saying, “I have lost my motivation.” The issue is complex. It is important that we spend a lot of time walking round the school, but it is also important that people share their problems. Our senior management team tries to look out for things. It is also important to have social events with colleagues.

Fiona Hyslop: It is important to have staffrooms: I want to make the case for staffrooms.

Don Ledingham: Absolutely. We have just gone through a public-private partnership process in which we were offered a choice between staff bases and a staffroom. We said that we would take both. The situation in some schools that now operate without a staffroom terrifies me; those schools can become remarkably isolated places.

We are fortunate in having an active school environment. Extra-curricular opportunities come into play in that respect; people have the notion that extra-curricular activities are just for youngsters, but they are also important to teachers. A number of our staff are engaged in activities—16 staff are taking 100 youngsters to Belgium on Monday, for example. They will forge relationships during the trip that will benefit them for the next four or five years.

We need to break down the idea that teaching is just about the time that a teacher spends in a classroom with 30 youngsters—teaching is much broader than that. Schools need to consider how they can bring people together in as many ways as possible. Schools also need to identify where people are having problems and whether that is to do with motivation. There is a difference between a teacher who lacks motivation and one who is failing. When the latter is the case, schools need to go through a series of stages to address the issue. Youngsters only get one chance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If I may, I will put three brief questions to the panel, the first of which is for Victoria Aldridge. Is there an argument for including in teacher training and in postgraduate certificate in education courses strategies for dealing with children who are not intrinsically motivated?

Victoria Aldridge: That is a good point. There is room for that to be addressed, but the PGCE curriculum is tight as it is and it would be difficult to add something else to it. When a teacher has qualified, there are CPD courses. I am running a CPD course in Edinburgh that is about enhancing classroom practice, giving classroom teachers strategies to develop a number of aspects of classroom practice, such as supporting pupils, learning styles and multiple intelligences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is an area that could be usefully considered.

Victoria Aldridge: Yes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Judith McClure has largely answered this question, but will she summarise the best ways in which head teachers can be supported in their actions to create a positive ethos in their school? Creating a common purpose, leadership and flexibility have been mentioned, but will she summarise that in her own words?

Dr McClure: It is important that head teachers have a chance to see other schools and to work together. The opportunity to see another school, shadow another head teacher and see different ways of doing things is priceless in considering one's own practice to see how it can be improved. If a head teacher is not improving their practice every day, they are wrong.

Don Ledingham and I have conversations that are of great value to both of us; the issue is getting the time to do it, although it is almost more important than anything. The issue is not so much about going on courses as it is about making contact, finding out how others deal with certain situations and asking, "What do you do? What are your problems? How have you surmounted them?" Doing that also gives the inspiration that we need, because it is a big job and a tough one.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does Don Ledingham have anything to say about that?

Don Ledingham: It is a tough job. It is crucial to have the opportunity to speak with colleagues about the nuts and bolts, not about the administration of the school. It is also crucial that head teachers, other senior managers and staff get the opportunity to visit other schools, because it is so easy to become lost in our own wee world.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Do you feel that disengagement or disaffection affects boys more than girls?

Don Ledingham: I worry about generalisations. I worry about labelling a child as disaffected or disengaged. We have youngsters in our school who go into a maths class and come alive and who will go into another subject and cause mayhem. They might be labelled as disaffected because they cause mayhem in more classes than they come alive in, but we must find the opportunities to reinforce those areas where they are captivated and where they demonstrate some mastery.

I urge the committee to stay clear of the notion of disaffected and disengaged children. It is a hideous label to give any child, because all children are accessible; there is a way in to every child.

Dr Murray: I have questions about relationships with other agencies. I acknowledge what you say about not wanting to stick labels on children and create expectations of failure. From having visited your school, I know that you do some interesting work with children who have had problems, whereby you bring in people from outside and work on other skills such as emotional intelligence.

Yesterday we heard from an informal panel of teachers that the integrated community school approach has a lot of value because it can bring in

other professionals who can help to engage pupils and give them a wider range of experiences and skills. However, the roll-out of that approach across Scotland has been patchy and there are issues about funding and links between the home and the school.

Some of us went to Perth and saw the smart young people project with the YMCA. That is also very successful, but there are issues about funding streams for such relationships between schools and other bodies.

From your experience, what is the role of people outwith the immediate school community in giving support to pupils who might be getting less out of their education than they could be? I am trying to avoid labelling people.

12:30

Don Ledingham: We have been an integrated new community school for six years, and the first three years were perhaps the most painful period that I have ever experienced as a professional. Bringing together two disparate groups with different perceptions is a real challenge. One of the things that helped us was the fact that new community schools were just trying to replicate what was already happening in a good school. Inevitably, that would lead to clashes. The key for us has been in focusing on the needs of vulnerable children and identifying those children as early as possible, using a variety of agencies, in order to support them.

One of my colleagues described an interesting concept. Some people might find it offensive, so I hesitate to use the word "class". We are trying to give vulnerable children from backgrounds that are exceptionally challenging the opportunities and support systems that a middle-class child has. That has been exceptionally successful, and the different professionals have had considerable impact because they can engage with parents in a different way. Head teachers and teachers have a label. When we go to somebody's house, we are still a head teacher or a teacher, whereas other professionals have a much more open channel of communication.

In our experience, the development of that multiprofessional team has been exceptional, as has the impact that it has had on the cohort that has come through in the past four years, with the focus on vulnerable students. Every one of the 14 students whom we identified has sat their Scottish Qualifications Authority examinations—I hope that some of them are sitting exams today—and that is an important measure for us.

Dr Murray: Some of those pupils are not expected to take many of the conventional exams, but will develop other skills. You have also done some work on that.

Don Ledingham: Yes. We have developed what we call an enhanced curriculum, as opposed to an alternative curriculum. Points were made earlier about avoiding streaming. When we establish a stream, we immediately establish a group of youngsters who are labelled as failures from the start. That may not have an impact on the school at the time, but when those youngsters get into the third and fourth year, they have become a group who are—I will go back on myself—disengaged and who have been labelled. They are a powerful group, and if we allow that to happen it creates a critical mass that grows almost exponentially.

We have tried to counter that by not creating such a group or by having an alternative curriculum. We ask youngsters to pick their five best subjects, which will vary from youngster to youngster, depending on their abilities and enthusiasm. We also ask that they do maths and English. We then try to tailor an individualised curriculum to those youngsters' needs, including anger management, careers programmes and other things that they can do. They have responded well to that, and the biggest consequence is that we have avoided creating a group of youngsters who wander around the school revelling in the idea that they are the worst class in the school.

We must recognise the fact that some youngsters really like the notion of being the worst class in the school. Teachers say to them, "You're the worst class in the school," and the youngsters think, "Yeah, great." That gives them a status that, otherwise, they would not have. Schools must break that down and attack it in every way that they can to focus on the needs of the individual and to build that individual up. That is a matter for the expert staff whom we have in our pupil support team in the school.

The Convener: There is some notion of parity of esteem lurking behind that, is there not, in terms of different career and school options?

Don Ledingham: Yes, absolutely.

Dr Murray: Do you think that the roll-out of the integrated community school model has been patchy throughout Scotland? That seems to have been the experience. Is that because people have expected community schools to do too much? Has there not been sufficient support?

Don Ledingham: The problem is that people look down the road and say, "Oh, the new community school people." That is the wrong perception. The school is us; we are the school. We are the new integrated community school. It is about the way in which we think about and

approach how we work with youngsters, as opposed to saying, "Well, who are these people? Not a lot has changed" and blaming a group. It takes a long time to bring people together to make a change.

We need a consistent vision, the focus of which must be on giving vulnerable children the same opportunities as the majority of students in the school. Indeed, such an approach benefits the majority, because all too often that small group interferes with others' right to learn.

Ms Byrne: Victoria Aldridge's submission lists various factors that have an impact on pupil motivation. When I read it, I separated those factors into environmental factors and factors that relate to the running of the school. Bearing in mind those environmental factors and the comments that have been made about community schools, we should level the playing field to ensure that children who are affected by deprivation at home can, for example, come to school and have a good breakfast at breakfast clubs. You also say that having a sense of achievement affects pupil motivation. I realise that we will never be able to do enough to remedy the situation, but are we doing enough to bring those children up to a certain level and ensure that they come into school ready to learn and able to work in the classroom?

Victoria Aldridge: A recognised feature in education, especially in deprived areas, is that children have all sorts of backgrounds and deprived circumstances. Many schools are already introducing breakfast clubs and giving children the warmth, love, respect and sense of belonging that they need. In response to your question, I think that enough is being done, but it is important that we keep doing such things and not let matters slip.

The Convener: Bryan McLachlan talks in his submission about the importance of involvement in youth organisations outside the school. However, I am not sure whether you mean uniformed organisations in that respect. Do schools make the most of such organisations? I rather suspect that sometimes they do not.

I find it interesting that, despite Don Ledingham's background in PE, no one has talked about the motivational aspects of subjects such as drama, art or PE. The emerging theme is the motivation of the teacher, which would apply as much to maths or French as it would to drama or PE. Am I right in saying that, although some subjects offer more motivational opportunities, the key is the teacher instead of the subject?

Bryan McLachlan: Schools should never be afraid to recognise that children can learn skills in other places. For example, our school has something called the achievement wall, where we display the name of anyone who achieves anything inside or outside the school setting. We find that that is very good for children.

You mentioned art, drama and PE. The latter is a big subject outside school, because children have a massive opportunity to get involved in team sports. As my submission makes clear, schools should recognise the achievements and skills that children attain with outside organisations.

Don Ledingham: No matter whether we are talking about performing arts or sport, we must reinforce the connections between such activity and the school. After all, some students might say, "I hate school, but I love playing football for the school team" or "I love swimming at school, but I hate school itself." It is up to teachers and senior managers to reinforce the message that football, swimming and so on are part of the school experience and that football is just as important as maths. Doing that makes it difficult for youngsters to say "I hate school", because it immediately raises a dichotomy. As a result, it is important to acknowledge that such aspects are valuable. Similarly, we want to make as much use as we can of community organisations and establish links between school and community activity, whether it be sport or the performing arts.

The Convener: Does that happen as much as it should? I sometimes think that such matters exist in parallel universes, and that they do not connect as much as they should.

Don Ledingham: The situation varies a lot from place to place, because it often comes down to individuals. We need to consider sustainable models and the opportunities that are emerging from the schools for ambition programme and the introduction of active secondary school co-ordinators. We need to look at ways in which we integrate with community activities, whether they are sports or other events.

Dr McClure: That is right. Everything that we have said is about the school being part of the community. The exciting thing about partnership working is that not only teachers are doing it. We are all working together and bringing our strengths to the process. We must make schools part of the community all year round, not only during term time. That is another huge challenge.

Bryan McLachlan: Nobody has mentioned enterprise education this morning. As I prepared to come here, I thought about what motivates children and when I see children in my school at their most motivated. That tends to happen through enterprise. Enterprise projects can link with communities and other organisations. We have talked about children being more motivated when they believe that they are involved in the decision-making process and have ownership over

their learning. They gain that most obviously in enterprise education, which I think is a tremendous aspect to be involved with. Often, enterprise projects in schools can involve only a small number of children from a particular class, year group or school, which is a great shame. I believe that that emerging area of our curriculum is valuable and motivates children highly.

The Convener: That is a useful point on which to finish a fascinating evidence session. I am extremely grateful—I am sure that committee members are, as well—for the input that we have had from our witnesses. As always, if you think of anything afterwards that you feel it is crucial to let us know about, we are keen to receive such input. Thank you for your attendance and we will be in further touch with you.

We are not quite finished, because item 2 on the agenda is a brief review of the evidence that we have heard today. We want to give the clerks a bit of assistance to take forward strands that have emerged from the evidence.

The point that emerged about the need for staffrooms, in response to Fiona Hyslop's question, was extremely important. It is a good idea to give pupils from one school the opportunity to visit other schools and work together; perhaps that does not happen as much as it should. Bryan McLachlan's point about a consistent vision, particularly with regard to parity of esteem and the way in which that operates across the school for vulnerable children, was also important. The last point that was made—about the ownership of learning by children and young people—was also important. I mention those points for a kick-off. Do members have any observations?

Fiona Hyslop: I was taken by the idea of management or self-management of a teacher's career. Teachers tend to end up somewhere because they apply for a certain job rather than because a strategic view has been taken as part of either a wider local authority or Scotland-wide approach. It would be interesting to explore that issue. Perhaps we could ask HMIE whether it can assist by providing us with information about whether there are moves or developments in that regard. I know that, within local authorities, head teachers can be headhunted to go into specific schools where there is a challenge, but I am not sure to what extent that happens.

The Convener: There is a talent-spotting issue across the educational system. Although the witnesses were modest in the way that they expressed their views, it is clear that educational leadership by head teachers and other teaching staff is hugely important and not that easy to provide—not every school has such leadership. If every school had the inspirational leadership that we have heard about from some people, that would make a huge difference.

Mr McAveety: We need to have drivers and models for such change. The first panel was not particularly inspiring—those are the best words that I can use to describe it—but the second panel was very good at focusing on such issues; the witnesses faced up to the difficult issue of what can be done when someone is not fit to teach, either because they have fallen through the net and may have found that teaching is not for them or because they are tired when it comes to dealing with what is happening in their school. There was genuine enthusiasm to try to work that out. We heard very positive evidence about the role that head teachers have in addressing that issue.

The Convener: I had the interesting privilege of going to an event that was organised by the Scottish Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society, which Judith McClure chairs. Don Ledingham was also at the event. Some of the techniques that were used and the people who were at the event were very strong drivers for inculcating this sort of approach across the board and spreading good practice. As I understand it, SELMAS is a voluntary organisation.

Dr Murray: There was a divergence of views on the first panel, despite the fact that the witnesses all represented parts of the teaching profession. In a sense, it was difficult to reach a conclusion because some of their contributions were in conflict.

One thing that struck me about the second panel and which made its evidence more enlivening was the fact that the witnesses were much more optimistic about young people. They took a much more positive view of young people, even of those who are difficult. There was determination to assist young people to overcome difficulties, rather than to categorise them.

12:45

The Convener: Without doubt, optimism is the key.

Ms Alexander: The one point that I took from the first panel was David Eaglesham's question about how we manage the plug-in world. The challenge that teachers face in motivating pupils is more substantial because of the opportunities that are available to young people. That was an interesting thought, which we should not lose in the voluminous submissions that we have received. Do we say that the existence of the plug-in world makes life for teachers more difficult? What are its implications for the classroom experience?

As other members have said, understanding how we support leadership effectively at local authority and all-Scotland level is an interesting issue. Some work has been done in that regard, but it may be our job to pull together what is out there and to say how it may be built on.

People talked about exchanges between schools in very concentrated areas. One approach that has been tried elsewhere is to pair a successful and a more challenged school and their senior staff. We may want to consider that option in more detail. It is important both to support individuals' career development and to provide support where there is weakness, outwith the context of HMIE. Would school pairing—having someone like Don Ledingham at your shoulder over a prolonged period, along with his principal teachers—help?

The Convener: There is an interesting conflict between how much we give schools autonomy, so that they can develop their own styles, and how much is imposed from above by local authorities or the Scottish Executive.

Fiona Hyslop: It would be helpful if we could get a copy of Don Ledingham's article—I am sure that I have read it—in *The Times Educational Supplement* about the alternative management structure that he described.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: First, the weight of administrative work and whether that could be simplified, to give teachers more time, was a theme for all the witnesses. Secondly, from the evidence I do not have a totally clear view on how we should deal with a range of abilities in the classroom. It appeared that that can be more of a problem in some subjects than it is in others. Different schools seem to have different practices when dealing with the issue. More guidance on that matter would be helpful. The third point, which is very obvious, is that family support for young people is enormously helpful.

The Convener: We did not develop as much as we should have the issue of how to bring about family support in a challenging situation. We should pursue that point.

Ms Byrne: Other than the issues that have been mentioned, I am interested in exploring further what was said about community schools and interagency working. Points were made about the funding of community schools and the key role that they play. As has been said, that role is not new, but there is a lot of room for identifying good practice.

We have not yet considered the issue of restorative justice, which was mentioned. I have been reading some of the work that is being done in that area, and it would be useful for us to take that forward.

It was clear from the evidence that the issue of class sizes needs to be considered. If teachers want to look at young people's learning styles, to plan for individuals, to deal with all their different intelligences and to engage with young people, they must have time to do that.

The Convener: To some extent, your point is related to what James Douglas-Hamilton said about bureaucracy, red tape and whether time can be freed up. The curriculum review is important. There are a number of ways of getting at the same issue.

Ms Byrne: The issues that you highlight are different from that of smaller class sizes, which is a key aspect of the learning and teaching of young people today. There is overlap, but there are also differences.

Dr Murray: I want to pick up on Wendy Alexander's point about the plug-in world, which is interesting. That can be a disadvantage, but for children with particular learning styles it is an opportunity.

Fiona Hyslop: The teachers to whom we spoke yesterday said that the focus needs to be on skills, rather than content. They were grateful for the existence of the internet, which enables people to find things out straight away, instead of having to remember them through rote learning. That interconnection provides huge opportunities, but there is not the space and time to develop them. We have not really touched on the role of ICT in pupil motivation, although it seems to be one of the solutions to which people continually refer.

Mr Macintosh: Bryan McLachlan specialises in ICT.

Fiona Hyslop: I should have asked him about that.

Mr Macintosh: His submission mentions the benefits of ICT, but it returns to the point that ICT is just a tool and that, in the end, it is far less important than good teaching.

A few positive points emerged from the first panel, although there were a few spurious points. I got the impression that the panel felt that matters are heading in the right direction. There was great support for the curriculum review and for the opportunity to introduce flexibility in the curriculum, although there was a bit of concern about that. There was also huge support for the outcomes of the McCrone settlement and the on-going work on it.

I do not accept entirely the point that was made about guidance teaching, but the other aspects of the McCrone deal and of the reprofessionalisation of teaching are clearly at the heart of what the witnesses want. They also support the leadership, enterprise education and vocational teaching

programmes that are being rolled out. We did not talk about many programmes in detail, but the range of programmes is thought of as adding value to teaching work and as giving teachers the chance to motivate pupils.

I was struck by the fact that all the witnesses said that the most important aspects are values and non-specific programmes, such as those to create a positive school ethos. The important issue is the ability of a head teacher to lead and motivate his or her staff, to reward success and motivational teaching, to interact with extra-curricular activity and to allow aspects of the curriculum that are not the formal academic aspects. Even Judith McClure from St George's talked about the relationship of the school with the community and developing a school community as the most important issues. All those aspects are now rewarded in the "How good is our school?" and HMIE processes. Victoria Aldridge presented a list of issues that were nothing to do with the curriculum—they were about good breakfasts, good lunches and good relationships with home.

All the witnesses avoided home-school relations slightly, which is probably because teachers are slightly wary of that difficult issue. Teachers' relationships with parents are awkward.

The Convener: We did not press the second panel on that issue.

Mr Macintosh: No. I am not sure where we could go on the issue, although good parental support is clearly essential, or at least beneficial. However, the first panel suggested that teachers have to work with pupils despite what is happening to them at home. I got the impression that parents were seen as a problem; the witnesses were thinking not about working with parents to benefit the child, but that the parents' attitudes were a problem that had to be surmounted or got round.

The Convener: Underlying the evidence, there was the one-to-one issue. There is a slight difference between primary schools, where there is a single teacher who knows the class, and secondary, where the teaching splits up a bit. Issues might arise out of that, as we have heard in other contexts.

Fiona Hyslop: Is there not a fundamental issue that the value of education, as society and parents see it, may be deteriorating? The learning community is essential and motivation is implicit in a successful learning community. That means that if society does not value education, a school—however strong its ethos—might be swimming against the tide, because the motivation for education will be lacking. Historically, Scotland has always valued education but I wonder whether that has changed in the past few generations.

The Convener: There has been a change in relation to the fact that people are asking about the relevance of education to them.

Mr Macintosh: That is totally wrong. I could not disagree more with the suggestion that we no longer value education. It is true that there is a little bit more selfishness in our society than there used to be, which we might all decry, but, more than ever, the value of education is recognised enormously by individuals and society.

Fiona Hyslop: That is not what we heard in the evidence that we were given. I am not saying that a large number of people do not value education—I accept that 50 per cent of people go into higher education—but there are significant numbers of families and children who do not live in communities in which education's value is recognised.

Mr Macintosh: That was one person's opinion.

Fiona Hyslop: Two people said that.

Mr Macintosh: In that case, it was two people's opinion, which was unsubstantiated and came across as reactionary.

The Convener: The quality of some of the evidence that we heard was a little questionable. However, if that is the view of a significant section of the teaching population, that is relevant.

Fiona Hyslop: The issue was raised in relation to Kenneth Macintosh's point about home links. If the parents do not value education, how can the children value it? It would be wrong of us to ignore that issue.

The Convener: We are not trying to solve the problems at the moment; we are simply trying to note issues for the benefit of the clerks.

Dr Murray: We must recognise that the traditional form of education ended up not educating a considerable number of people because they were not considered to be worth educating. It is not as if that system represented the halcyon days of Scottish education when everyone got the education that they deserved.

I thought that the argument was more to do with the purpose of education. At our informal meeting yesterday, we talked about what we are educating people for. For example, should we educate people for education's sake, for the purpose of employment or for the purpose of lifelong learning?

The Convener: That is the argument that people have any time that they discuss education.

Dr Murray: It is a debate that has gone on within the Executive.

Fiona Hyslop: People have different views on the why of education. Has that changed?

Mr McAveety: I keep going back to this point but, in each of our areas, there are schools that have developed a good ethos from a position of not having a good ethos. We all know that that transforms the school, the pupil's experience of the school and the perception of the school in the community. A school's ethos is linked to things such as home links, extra-curricular activities and doing things in the community.

We have not had much to explore the active schools issue and other extra-curricular activities. Nor have we touched on the debate about arts and culture in the curriculum, which is taking place around the final stage of the Cultural Commission's work. We did not get much of a chance to discuss that today. As we have only hunches on that issue rather than firm conclusions, it might be worth thinking further about it. Many of our witnesses, such as Don Ledingham, talked about pupils having negative feelings about the school as an institution but enjoying elements of school. From running school sports teams, I know that you can nail a few of the boys during the week and say to them, "If you want to play on Saturday, you've really got to toe the line Monday to Friday." Sometimes, of course, that did not work and it was impossible to get through to some of the hard cases, but when it worked, it provided other ways in.

The core issue for me is how we can create the sort of values and ethos that we can see in the successful schools in our areas. I do not want to condemn schools that do not have such an ethos. Everyone got troubled as soon as the hard question was asked about what can be done about a teacher who is either ineffectual or is switched off. Everyone just sort of shrugged and said that it is not really their problem. However, if that teacher is teaching your wean, you will know that that is fatal.

The Convener: Underlying what we are saying is the fact that, for an enormous number of children, school is an opportunity-giving experience that can enable them to transcend the difficulties that they might face because of their family background.

Ms Byrne: The message that came across strongly is that we must support the teachers to enable them to support the pupils. That issue relates to good leadership as well. If that can be done, we will be well on the way towards creating the ethos that we want to create.

On the issue of excluded children, which relates to social exclusion, we should not simply take the view that that happens because people do not value education; we should remember that there are certain mitigating circumstances that mean that education is not at the top of their agendas. Once we do that, we can examine the issue further and start to tackle it.

The Convener: With that, I close this meeting of the Education Committee.

Meeting closed at 13:00.

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