EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 8 June 2005

Session 2

£5.00

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by Astron.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 8 June 2005

	Col.
PUPIL MOTIVATION INQUIRY	2475
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING (CODE OF PRACTICE)	2508
ITEM IN PRIVATE	2542

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
11th 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:

Christina Allon (Careers Scotland)
Margaret Clarke (Learning and Teaching Scotland)
Bill Maxwell (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education)
Peter Peacock (Minister for Education and Young People)
Philip Rycroft (Scottish Executive Education Department)
Alan Stewart (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Mark Roberts

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

Education Committee

Wednesday 8 June 2005

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 09:49*]

Pupil Motivation Inquiry

The Convener (Robert Brown): Good morning and welcome to this meeting of the Education Committee. We are in public session, so everyone should turn off their mobile phones.

We have quite a long agenda this morning. Item 1 is to continue taking evidence in our pupil motivation inquiry. We have no fewer than three panels of witnesses, with the minister at the end. The witnesses on the first panel are old friends: Christina Allon, who is director of Careers Scotland; and Margaret Clarke, who is acting director of the information and communications technology learning section of Learning and Teaching Scotland. I welcome both of you. I do not know whether you want to say something to kick off. We have your paperwork, so unless there are specific supplementary comments that you would like to make, we shall go straight to questions.

Christina Allon (Careers Scotland): I am quite happy to go straight to questions. We provided a written submission that focused on the questions that have been raised by the committee and a supplementary submission that focused more on Careers Scotland.

The Convener: I shall start with an issue that has been looming behind our investigations but which has not really come out to the extent that it might have done—I am talking about the extent of disaffection and discipline problems in schools. I am not sure whether much about that percolates to your level, so it may be that there is not a great deal that you can say about it, although I would have thought that, because you deal with learning materials and methods, Learning and Teaching Scotland might be getting such information. Do either of you have anything to say on that?

Margaret Clarke (Learning and Teaching Scotland): That is certainly an important issue to some teachers, but I do not think that it is an overburdening concern. The majority of teachers are realistic and optimistic about meeting the needs of young people. We do a number of different things to support teachers. Yesterday, knowing that I was coming here today, I searched the Learning and Teaching Scotland web service, and I found 167 results for the word "motivation". That shows that, as part of the case studies exemplification with which they are supplying us, schools are identifying motivation as an important criterion for when they make changes and improvements to how they operate. We are working on a number of different projects in which the problem in respect of motivation has clearly been evident, including the assessment is for learning programme and the use of information and communications technology for learning. We are planning our national in-service event in September, at which there will be a seminar on the motivated school. It is a matter that teachers have brought to us, and we have tried to respond in a number of ways.

As MSPs, you may be interested to know that the MSPs in schools project was one of the projects that was returned from that web search on motivation. That definitely covered themes such as motivation, values and participation, as well as giving pupils the opportunity to work with members in developing a topic that they had chosen in their local areas. There have already been a lot of connections with the work here.

The Convener: I suppose that my underlying question is about whether well-motivated schools, well-motivated teachers and well-led schools can have an impact on reducing discipline problems, thereby allowing more time for proper teaching as opposed to holding pupils in check. Instinctively, one would think that they can, but is that the case?

Margaret Clarke: There is no doubt that good school leadership is important. I am not thinking only about the head teacher but about the class teacher as a leader in the room. Pupil leadership is also an aspect of leadership; all those are encapsulated in what you ask about. If a lesson is purposeful, if the teacher is clear and motivated, and if young people as individuals and the class as a whole have clear expectations of the lesson, it will be more motivating and supportive for everybody's learning.

Christina Allon: There are two key elements in pupil motivation. One is the universal element, which concerns what we need to do to ensure that we motivate and captivate all young people so that they can all realise their full potential; such things need to be done universally. The other element is the targeted element, to which you have referred and which concerns specific strategies that are required with people who are at risk of becoming disaffected.

We should think about what motivates all of us. We must first find something that interests the individual and which they are good at and we must build on that. Evidence is emerging that pupils who have clear career goals are much more ambitious, motivated and engaged with learning, and that they attain more because they can see the relevance of what they are learning to their aspirations for the future. They have something to

strive for and they know that they must learn if they are to achieve it. That is helped by an approach to learning and teaching that is based on activities and projects—in other words, an active learning approach—and by experiences outwith school.

A raft of measures apply to everyone, but specific strategies are necessary to deal with people who are at risk of becoming disengaged or disaffected. Good work is being done on that in different parts of the country. In the Glasgow area, there is a partnership approach that involves the local authority, the whole school—not just the school's guidance teachers—Careers Scotland and other agencies that can support learning and development. There are strategies that first find out what interests a person, what they are good at and how that can be built on, and which then identify the activities that will help them to make progress and to engage in other learning.

We believe that the development of career planning skills acts as a lubricant and a motivator for engagement in other learning. Several specific activities and projects—for example, the activate programme, the WorkNet programme and the career box career education resource—are coming on stream and being used in a number of schools. A reduction in the number of school leavers from certain schools who pursue negative options when they leave represents evidence of the difference that such programmes make. I would be happy to expand on any of those matters, if they are of interest.

The Convener: Before we widen the discussion, I want to pursue the differential between boys and girls. There is considerable evidence—both in the number of highers that are achieved and more generally—that girls seem to be more motivated than boys. For whatever reason, there are many more discipline difficulties with boys than there are with girls. What insight do we have into why that is the case? To some extent, there seems to have been a reversal of what used to be the position when the nature of society was different. We face a particular challenge in that regard.

Christina Allon: From my perspective, part of that is about rates of maturation—girls mature earlier than boys. The age and relative stage of the development of girls and boys must be taken into account. Peer-group pressure is also a factor.

There are some initiatives and developments around engaging young people's interest in science and technology. For example, our space school initiative captures the imagination of boys and girls and engages them in activity that is seen to be cool. The exciting link with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and with space scientists helps to engage pupils in more serious learning about science and technology, but within a context that gives them a bit of street cred. That is a non-professional learning and teaching approach to the issue, but I am sure that my colleague will have other reflections.

Margaret Clarke: I have an additional point about language development. There is evidence that girls develop their language and reading and writing skills earlier than boys, but we should not stick purely to gender issues because there are obviously girls who find language development difficult. We should concentrate on developing teachers' expertise in thinking about different learning styles and about the different ways in which young people respond to text, pictures, video or audio, or to a combination of those things. If a teacher is thinking about personalising his or her learning and differentiating their teaching approaches to make them appropriate to individuals, that will address some of the differences, which are gender issues, stereotypically, although they not just about gender.

10:00

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): I want to come back to Christina Allon on a couple of points. One of the things with which we have been struggling is how to spread good practice. Careers Scotland grew out of a large number of disparate organisations that have come together in the past five years. Can you share anything with us about what you have learned in that process about how to spread best practice? We already have an emerging view in schools that some places are responding outstandingly well to that challenge, while other areas are just not aware of where the most exciting work is going on.

Christina Allon: The initial point is about awareness. Do we know where there is good practice and can we identify it? Where we can do that, can we take some of the lessons learned from evidence of good practice and get the people who have been involved in developing that to talk to their colleagues and their peers in other places?

We take a more structural approach in that we have a partnership agreement with every local authority and every individual school in Scotland. Where we find things that work well in one particular school or geographical area, we inform our staff and then encourage them to raise that in the context of their partnership discussions with councils or schools in other patches.

We have also found that the evidence-based approach makes a difference. For example, a number of schools in the Glasgow area were concerned that they had high levels of school leavers with an unemployed destination. A couple of those schools engaged with us in very proactive

enhanced activity and down the line, we were able to evidence a reduction in the number of school leavers who went into unemployment as their destination. We then used that evidence as a useful lever to discuss with other schools and councils the benefits of taking particular approaches or getting involved in specific activities.

The first thing to do is to raise awareness and then to develop structured mechanisms to ensure that we capture that and are able to communicate it and share it with others. Secondly, we need a tangible evidence base that shows that what has been done has made a difference. The third point is about creating opportunities for staff development through conferences at which the people who are involved can be brought together and given the chance to talk to their peers.

Ms Alexander: Obviously, Careers Scotland deals with students towards the end of their secondary school careers—I know that from talking to Careers Scotland staff in my own area—so it is not possible for Careers Scotland to redress all the challenges that somebody might have met in the entirety of their school career. I know that a lot of the work that Careers Scotland has done has demonstrated that employers are looking particularly for young people who have life skills and the capacity to work in teams, and who have the potential to be motivated even if the school environment has not motivated them for whatever reason. Given what you know about what employers are looking for, is there anything that the committee should draw on as we think about the policy conclusions? How does one ensure that students who are not motivated by school per se have, before they end their school careers, one or two basic life skills that are required by the employment market, at least as a passport to life and work thereafter? Is there anything specific in that area that we should consider including in our recommendations?

Christina Allon: I will expand on two points that I mentioned earlier. One of those is that students must see the relevance of what they learn to the outside environment. Some of that is about undertaking some learning in other environments, whether in a college or on an employer's premises as work experience.

The second question was about the context of learning. Many of the programmes with which we support schools focus on sectors that are important to the economy—science and technology, manufacturing or hospitality—and take some of the contexts of those industries and sectors into learning and teaching so that the core skills are being developed in contexts that are relevant to the world of work. That is part of what we need to do, but we also need to expose pupils to some of the vocational education initiatives that are starting to be piloted, and give them college placements.

The other point on which I would like to expand is the importance of going back further into the school experience. Rather than focus on pupils at the point of leaving school, we need to do much more to capture and motivate them early on, so Careers Scotland is increasingly going further back. Our career education resource—career box—is a framework for people from ages three to 18. It can be used by primary and secondary schoolteachers; our lessons are targeted at the transition point from primary 7 to secondary 1, which seems to be a critical point as far as motivation is concerned.

Ms Alexander: I commend the brevity of Careers Scotland's submission, but it might be helpful if you could let us have a one-page note on core skills that is written for the non-cognoscenti. The subject overlaps with what we have done in our inquiry on curriculum development, so an explanation in simple language of the core skills might help us with the final report.

Christina Allon: I would be happy to provide that.

Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP): I was interested in what you say in your submission about too many people having fallen into their careers down the years. That applies right across the board and not only to people whose aspirations are not well fitted to the labour market, because the fact is that people do not form aspirations with regard to future careers. Should there be a much more structured part of education—perhaps even part of the curriculum—in which pupils consider the world beyond school and how they will make their way in it? There does not appear to be much in the school curriculum that addresses that at the moment.

There is also the problem that a school's catchment area might be a community in which there are low aspirations. Unemployment might be endemic and the prevailing attitude might be that it does not matter what young people do at school because they will end up on the dole anyway. However, in a different catchment area—perhaps a more middle-class area—young people might be encouraged to carry on, achieve academically and make their career choices later, which is also a recipe for not getting those choices right. Will you respond to those points?

Christina Allon: Certainly; that subject is close to my heart. Everyone should be able to develop the career planning skills that will enable them to adapt proactively to change in their personal circumstances or the requirements of the labour market. The foundations for those skills need to be

laid early in school, not when pupils have left school. First, they need the motivation to take control and think about careers. Secondly, they need to learn to understand themselves, their skills, their aspirations and their circumstances. Thirdly, they need to understand the labour market, where opportunities come from and the link between them. Fourthly, they need the decision-making skills to make those connections. Those skills need to be developed in the school system, not after people have left school.

There are two key developments that can help. One is the determined to succeed initiative, which the Executive has supported. One of the underpinning themes of determined to succeed that is often forgotten is career education; we in Careers Scotland certainly support schools and colleges in that and feel that it should be built into the school curriculum. Our career box resource has been developed for teachers in order to facilitate that.

The curriculum for excellence puts individuals at the heart of the system, and aims to empower all individuals to be confident and to be able to manage change in their lives. We see career planning as a core skill that can enable and facilitate that, so I would like much more to be built into the mainstream curriculum around that. It should not be additional to the curriculum; it should be part and parcel of what we try to achieve with all our young people.

In communities in which there is low aspiration and a history of people not being in employment or not aiming at higher education, we need to target the parents as well as the young people themselves. We need to bring in role models and mentors who can encourage and support people to think out of the box and out of their own environments. There are a number of specific initiatives. One is called goals; it encourages young people from backgrounds where there is not a tradition of aiming for higher education to realise that higher education could be for them. Another of our key products is called WorkNet. It is designed to combat people's cultural predisposition or assumption that achievement and aspiration are not for people like them. There are some targeted interventions and there is mainstreaming into the curriculum.

The Convener: I suspect that "goals" makes most young people think of a five-a-side football facility.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Do you think that school visits can stimulate young people to great endeavour or to follow the career path? Two obvious examples not very far from here are the Scottish Seabird Centre, where children can go and, through the use of closed-circuit television, see birds as if they were within 2ft of them, although they are in fact many miles away; and the National Museums of Scotland, including the Museum of Scotland and the Museum of Flight, where young people can see Concorde, in which there was a major Scottish contribution through invention and construction of its wings. Can that kind of experience stimulate young people into thinking along—

Christina Allon: Absolutely. It is all about young people seeing the relevance of what they learn at school: it is about the world that we live in, or the world outside. Often, it is about capturing their imagination through experiences outwith school. Those experiences can then be taken back into the school system, and learning can be built around that. Those excellent educational resources should be viewed in that way.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): After Lord James's plug for East Lothian, I am tempted to—

The Convener: You had your shot last week.

Mr Macintosh: I have a couple of questions for Margaret Clarke, although Christina Allon may also wish to comment. When we started our inquiry, I expected to hear more about the importance of subjects such as music, drama, physical education and other subjects that have not traditionally been regarded as core academic subjects. Those subjects have, however, been inspirational for many pupils, although that has not emerged in evidence from our questioning so far. Perhaps that is because of our questioning, or perhaps the subjects are less important than I had thought.

Does Learning and Teaching Scotland have any opinions about the importance of such subjects, not just in the school curriculum but—as it is put in Learning and Teaching Scotland's written submission under the heading, "Climate and ethos in schools"—in pupils' "engagement with the school"?

10:15

Margaret Clarke: We want the emphasis always to be on considering education in the round. Some individuals are particularly gifted in music, PE or the arts, and schools try to play on and develop those strengths. It is about considering the whole child and their needs from early years right the way through their education. With academic subjects, that becomes a more secondary focus; teachers still tend to think along subject lines. Through such developments as the curriculum for excellence, there is an emphasis on moving away from seeing secondary schools as being just for the academic process of achieving exam success in individual named subjects and towards considering the needs of the whole young

person and preparing them to have a passion for learning generally and a commitment to lifelong learning from birth to beyond secondary school.

There are a number of initiatives. Authorities such as North Lanarkshire Council have developed comprehensives with an emphasis on sport or music as a motivator for young people. We are not saying that they will necessarily win gold medals, but they might get involved in sports coaching and team building or in leadership roles. In their fifth or sixth year they might do a number of highers or advanced highers in a range of subjects. They develop a healthy outlook on life and might contribute to their school by doing a sports coaching award and might develop that activity in their 20s and beyond. Similarly, we develop people's interests in arts and music, not in an academic way but in a way that makes them enjoy performing and working with others to put on a school show. That is hugely important and activities such as end-of-term and fun events are associated with the ethos of a school and are part of what helps to make young people and all staff in a school feel part of a mutually supportive learning community.

Mr Macintosh: I was expecting to hear more about the last point that you made. The curriculum will always have limitations for some and, as Christina Allon pointed out, some people will be motivated by considering their long-term career prospects. We are discussing how to motivate pupils to engage with the school and see the benefits that school can give them. Many things attract pupils to a school and give them a sense of belonging—I am thinking of extracurricular activities. I was expecting to hear more about that. Perhaps Learning and Teaching Scotland is not the right organisation to ask about that. I would like to get a handle on evidence on the importance of schools that offer such activities. I am aware that there are many good schools in East Renfrewshire, which I represent. What marks them out are things such as the quality of the school orchestra, the school shows that are put on and the general level of activity that goes on in the school outwith specific lessons in the classroom. To me, that shows that pupils want to go to school; they are skipping into school in the morning—at least at primary school level. Do you have a view on that? Do you compile evidence on it or can you point us in the right direction?

Margaret Clarke: We are clear that such activities enrich the school experience hugely, because they are fundamental to the ethos and values of the community. A number of them relate to leadership in the school—I do not just mean the head teacher—and the links that the school has with its community and with parents. Those things are intertwined; schools are not just to do with the academic bits of education. Some schools have breakfast clubs so young people are there from the early morning. Some schools cannot close at night because young people and others from the community are still there using sports facilities. Such schools are vibrant hubs for their communities; they gain from and give to the communities. It is a two-way process in which the school is regarded as a centre within the community. That also touches on support, to which you referred.

Another dimension is brought to that by education for citizenship and the work that is done on pupil voice, such as pupil councils, within schools. The idea is that, right the way through from primary school, young people should have an opportunity to influence what happens at school. That is not to say that they will be the teachers and show that two plus two is no longer four, but they will talk about little things that make a difference, which will help them to participate actively. Such activities are hugely helpful. They are not done only at lunch time; some schools timetable such activities so that they are given a priority and so that the young people and the staff value them. That has a knock-on effect in that, if the class representatives are truly representative of their peers' views, all will feel that they have a chance to influence. Therefore, they will feel valued, their self-esteem will be higher and they will be more receptive in class. They will be keen and eager and, as you say, will skip along to school.

The Convener: Is there a sense in which school orchestras or school shows are results of good motivation as well as causes of it?

Margaret Clarke: Yes. It is a two-way process. That takes us back to the need for the school to establish its own values and have an ethos that supports and encourages. The two are obviously interrelated.

The Convener: On a technical point, at the end of Learning and Teaching Scotland's submission, you have listed relevant work undertaken; do those headings refer to reports of various kinds?

Margaret Clarke: Yes.

The Convener: Are they all available?

Margaret Clarke: Yes. A number of them are available online.

Would it be helpful to the committee if I were to say a little in response to the earlier question about identifying good practice?

The Convener: Yes, it would be.

Mr Macintosh: My next question is about that. Under the heading "Curriculum and pedagogy" alone, you have listed a number of welcome initiatives in your submission; we are discovering

that there is a lot of good practice, but we are not quite sure how teachers find out about it. Who spreads it around and provides leadership on good practice?

Margaret Clarke: That relates to what Christina Allon said on Careers Scotland's behalf. Within Learning and Teaching Scotland, identifying and disseminating good practice is hugely important. We identify good practice through effective links with local authorities, schools and other national bodies and we work with Careers Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and others to ensure that there is a shared view of what is good practice.

We have a national priorities development team, and each local authority is linked with a named member of that team. In addition, each member of the team works with a named contact in five or six local authorities so that they know what is going on, know what support the local authority is looking for and can offer support through in-service training or by running events for the staff in a particular school or across a local authority.

The members of our national priorities development team and a number of our other colleagues are seconded staff. Secondment is another way that we can identify and work with good practice. Between 30 and 35 of our staff are secondees rather than permanent employees of Learning and Teaching Scotland. Those posts are made known through open advert. Staff members come out of schools or local authorities for six months or up to two years and bring to us their expertise and their knowledge of what is happening in schools right now. They bring to the organisation a sense of currency that keeps us up to date with the identified needs in schools.

We have a number of other Executive-funded projects that offer the opportunity to disseminate good practice. We have an online, facilitated community called heads together, which has just over 2,000 active participating members, out of roughly 3,000 head teachers in all sectors in Scotland. Heads together uses software that is easy for head teachers to use. Part of the aim was to help head teachers to become more familiar with the use of information technology, but its prime purpose is to give heads an opportunity to exchange policies and practice within a closed community. It operates in different ways. Hot seats allow experts or people with a particular interest in a subject to be identified for a two-week spell when they can be questioned by head teachers in an online environment at head teachers' convenience without anybody having to travel to a conference.

I am not a member of the community because, as I said, it is a closed community for head teachers, although a small number of our staff have access to the community to facilitate it and to ensure that it works. I asked our staff members what was happening in the community that might be relevant to motivation and they have given me some information. Some recent hot seats have covered topics such as releasing excellence through building self-esteem. That hot seat was taken by a nationally regarded expert called Jenny Mosley. In another hot seat, a primary head teacher from Uist talked about de Bono's thinking hats and how that theory was used to influence learning and teaching in her school. A representative from Renfew High School was a hot seat expert who looked at the primary 7 to secondary 1 transition, and there was a session on Jim Dalziel's enable project.

Head teachers have been sharing with one another successes and what they have learned from a number of different projects. Primary school hot seats have touched on enterprise and an example is a project called 100 per cent enterprise in St Helen's Primary School in North Lanarkshire.

Another way in which heads are disseminating good practice via the heads together community is by having themes for which resources are provided. If a school has worked up a theme that has proved worth while, perhaps to do with helping to motivate staff or pupils to do something about difficult areas, they can share what they have done in that confidential way.

In another part of the heads together community, head teachers are able to raise topics that interest them or just ask questions. Relevant to the committee's inquiry, recent questions from one head teacher have included, "Do you use SuccessMaker?" That is a commercial package about which the head wanted to find out before making decisions about it. The community gave that head access not just to other head teachers in their own local authority with whom they were familiar but to head teachers in the whole of Scotland, so they got a wider, national perspective.

Other questions that were relevant to motivation included those about using ICT to enhance learning. There was another about reintroducing play in primary 1 to primary 3, so the questions cover all sectors and are the kind with which heads are professionally engaging as a means of disseminating what is happening.

The Convener: Is it fair to say that that dissemination of best practice is coming up from the local area—I do not suppose that we could say that headmasters are "below"—and is not being dictated from on high by Scottish Executive guidance? Does that approach work more effectively, or does it mean that such dissemination happens in the best schools but does not happen where the leadership is less

motivated?

Margaret Clarke: Clearly, in the case of heads together, that will depend on people accessing the community. As I indicated, the figures show that well over two thirds of the head teacher staff are trained to use the community. During May, there were 40,000 hits on the community's web pages and 3,000 different visits were made. The rising trend in the figures for the use of the heads together community indicates that head teachers are increasingly valuing it as a place to go to discuss various topics.

Although this is not as immediately relevant to this inquiry, heads will also be examining national initiatives such as "a curriculum for excellence" and trying to assimilate them. Some of the questions that have been posed are helping head teachers think through ways to support the purposes of the curriculum—which have been considered nationally—by making it appropriate, understandable and applicable in a way that best suits their own schools.

10:30

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): My question is related both to what has just been said and to what Wendy Alexander was talking about earlier. You were talking about skills for work, and in your written submission, you say:

"The number of assessments makes learning less enjoyable. Fewer assessments and valuing a wider range of achievement would help."

Do you have any examples of how success in developing skills for work can be celebrated? That statement in your submission chimes with some of the things that the teachers were telling us during our round-table discussion, in particular that there is too much emphasis on assessment and not enough on achievement.

Are there examples of how developing such skills and achieving things with them can be recognised? If we make explicit to learners the importance of their own individual methods of learning, and if we can help them understand how they learn, they will be more able to learn in future. Have you any examples of how that can be done effectively?

Margaret Clarke: I accept that acknowledging achievement goes far beyond academic attainment and exam performance. The most simple way of doing that is by praise. Everybody—not just teachers and parents—can work together and be appreciative of one another. It is not a one-way process. The teacher and the parent should praise the child, but the child can also, by enjoying the lesson, share their fun. It will feed back to the teacher that they have achieved something in that lesson. On a very small scale, the use of praise can help to celebrate success.

Certificates can be given out to somebody who has excelled in a particular way. That does not mean that they have necessarily been the best in the class at doing a particular thing, but they might have done something that particular day or week that they have never achieved before. Different schools can operate in different ways. For example, they can offer certificates for pupils to take home. I have seen homes where they are proudly displayed, held up by magnets on the fridge.

In other schools, display boards can be used to acknowledge something that a pupil has done that has been different from what they had done before. It can be supportive and encouraging for those pupils to walk along the corridor and see that they are the person who has been highlighted that particular week. There can also be wider, more formal award ceremonies. A number of schools operate in that way, and some local authorities have an annual awards event to celebrate achievements in the broadest sense, both in schools and in other sectors.

The Convener: I once received a prize for improvement in singing, which I thought was a little ambiguous.

Dr Murray: Some of the evidence from the teaching unions was quite scathing about that culture of award ceremonies. They said that it was back-slapping. They poured scorn on putting smiley faces on jotters and so on, and said that it was not cool for teenage boys to get that sort of thing. I presume that you would disagree with the unions on that.

Margaret Clarke: That applies to one gender and to a very particular age group. I was speaking more generally. I would guarantee that youngsters in primary school and in the early years love smiley faces and so on.

When I worked in a school as a senior manager, we introduced a positive behaviour management programme. Diaries were issued; each pupil had the same diary and log. It was strangely effective and, to my surprise, even the boys in first and second year were quite pleased about it. There is always a minority who say that such things are not cool but, on the whole, they wanted to get the stamps in their diary. The stamps were not quite as childish as a smiley face; they included stars. If pupils got 50 or 100 stamps, they could get different awards. The programme captured the attention of more boys of that age than I had expected. An element will always be disengaged from that sort of thing, but my experience was that if such programmes are used effectively and consistently throughout the school with all the staff operating them in the same way, they can be

helpful and motivating and can engage young people.

Mr Ingram: We are talking about tackling disaffection. I read more and more in the evidence that we are receiving that we need to create a climate for learning, raising children's aspirations and tapping into their enthusiasm at school. That is somewhat different to the ethos that we were used to 30 or 40 years ago, when there was a traditional learning situation and discipline systems. Respect was assumed and did not have to be earned.

Although creating a climate for learning and achievement in a school is related to local circumstances, there must be certain principles that can be applied across all schools. The submission from Learning and Teaching Scotland states:

"Relationships are better in schools that share responsibilities than where rules and procedures prevail."

It also states that teaching

"needs to encourage self-esteem and self-efficacy".

Will you summarise the principles that we are talking about and how they should be applied right across the school sector in Scotland? I take it that we are trying to shift our approach according to how society has changed over the past 30 or 40 years; we are now much more consumer oriented. Will you give me a flavour of that?

Margaret Clarke: In my view, what we have moved away from is the climate of fear that existed in some schools, where young people were not treated with respect and were expected to do what they were told regardless. Society has moved towards the view that children have the right to be respected from birth. There has been a shift away from the old-fashioned, traditional culture whereby head teachers and teachers instilled discipline by running around the corridors in black gowns. We now have an atmosphere of respect from the teachers and other adults in the school who work with young people; there is mutual respect. That is evidenced in the majority of schools' statements of their aims; the ethos to which they aspire is centred on a number of values.

In "a curriculum for excellence", there is a statement about the values on the Scottish Parliament's mace—justice, compassion, wisdom and integrity. I have heard a number of people refer to that as being one of the extremely helpful things in "a curriculum for excellence". It has helped them to examine their school values and identify with the words on the mace. They have run assemblies in their schools identifying what those words mean in the values and ethos of their individual schools. That is one example of how the approach within schools has changed. It is also an example of how a national publication has been of help to schools and has enabled them to consider the bigger picture. It has helped young people in schools to understand in some way the national concept of the Parliament's mace and see its relevance to them.

The Convener: It also helps MSPs' motivation to receive praise occasionally.

Mr Ingram: Although teachers can accept that approach in principle and theory, the difficulty is turning it into practice, particularly for the current teaching workforce, which was brought up and trained in a different ethos. Is that changing? Are those principles being put into practice the more that the new cohorts of young teaching recruits come through the system? Is there a problem with the older age groups?

Margaret Clarke: I pay tribute to the new teachers who are coming into the profession—whether in their 20s or as a second or third career—highly enthusiastic about the approach that I have described. It is easy to speak to staff in a huge number of schools and feel that vibrancy; one can feel that they genuinely identify with the learning community and with its ethos and values.

The aging population of teachers produces some challenges on teacher numbers, but the benefit of that might be that a few who have other values will be about to retire or will have retired recently. However, such teachers are a very small minority; a vast number of teachers who are in their last 10 years before retirement are readily able to operate in the climate and culture that I have described, in which there is respect and encouragement. Huge numbers of teachers operate effectively in that way, have a lifetime—or, rather, a career—of experience of operating in it and have built up sound relationships with other staff and the young people in their early years centre, primary school, special school or secondary school.

The Convener: I have a question about parity of esteem for the witness from Careers Scotland, who has been silent for a little while. Parity of esteem has many implications and we have heard a number of examples of how it works or does not work, but it is accepted that parity of esteem across the board—that is, between academic subjects, practical subjects and skills development—is an important theme in the underlying topic of value. Are you able to give us guidance on practical models for the implementation of parity of esteem?

On our visit to schools in Perth, I was struck by the fact that non-traditional subjects are offered as alternative modules that are equivalent to standard grades in other subjects. The non-traditional subjects are almost automatically part of the

subject choice that is available. They are not viewed as being better, worse or different; they are simply alternatives, which seems to be a good model. Can you give us any guidance on that? Parity of esteem is crucial if we are to motivate people who are not into what they might view as worthless courses; they could be in danger of dropping off the end of the spectrum, if I can put it like that.

10:45

Christina Allon: Parity of esteem is critical. It builds on people's aspirations, skills and potential. It recognises that the important thing is for everyone to realise their potential, rather than the potential that someone else thinks they ought to have. There are examples from across the country of packages being developed that take a practical skill—in anything from catering to construction—and involve local employers, the local further education college and school staff. Such programmes equip people with qualifications and accreditation that they can use in the world beyond education.

We need more such packaging up of programmes that focus on where the labour market opportunities are, on where an individual's skill set lies and on where the experience of the schools, the FE sector and the local employer community can be drawn upon to develop programmes that the Scottish Qualifications Authority can accredit. That will give people a passport to work beyond school. There are examples; I would be happy to supply some of them later, if the committee is interested.

The Convener: That would be very useful. A question on discipline is linked to that, which is where I began. We are getting the impression that a number of young people are coming out of school with no skills. They are no use in the employment market, and they have managed to go right through the educational system and have ended up ill equipped to survive. They then feed into the bottom of the unemployed and incapacity registers. That is no doubt sometimes linked with mental health problems and other factors. Are we managing to crack that to any extent? Careers Scotland must have the best view of that. What observations can you offer us?

Christina Allon: A number of programmes are now beginning to show evidence of success. I mentioned one earlier called WorkNet—its strapline is "No one is unemployable", That stems from a focus on business culture and employability. We have piloted that programme in a number of different contexts. Some of those pilots have been in emotional/behavioural disorder schools—those 11 schools cater for some of the most challenging young people. Through that programme, which involves school staff and Careers Scotland staff working jointly with the pupils, we have been able to secure success rates of 80 per cent for people moving into positive destinations. That compares favourably with the accepted success rate of about 30 per cent for young people who are moving out of care into the world beyond school. We are beginning to see success coming through from some programmes.

The Convener: Are those programmes working for people who come out of care? Is that the same cohort?

Christina Allon: Absolutely; it is the same cohort. It includes people coming out of care with a very mixed group of skills and with fairly volatile backgrounds. The programmes are beginning to succeed with that group.

The Convener: I would welcome some further information on any evaluation that you have done on those programmes. We have not concentrated on that cohort in our inquiry, but it is hugely important, so any guidance that you could give us would be helpful.

Mr Ingram: Learning and Teaching Scotland's submission says that

"There is insufficient support for mental health issues"

in schools. You advocate "trained school-based counsellors" and say that they

"can provide a link with psychologists."

What is the picture in Scottish schools? Do schools currently have such counsellors, or is that something that we have not really addressed yet?

Margaret Clarke: As far as integrated children's services are concerned, there has been a bringing together in respect of how a young person's needs are addressed as a whole, which encompasses education, social work, health needs, support from an educational psychologist and so on. It is apparent from a number of conversations with folk in schools that insufficient time is being spent with educational psychologists and others and it has been suggested that a school-based counsellor could offer more informal training and support and perhaps intervene before problems developed to the extent that professional help from an educational psychologist was required.

Emotional intelligence could be considered. Early work is being done through the health-promoting schools unit. Learning and Teaching Scotland hosts the unit, but we also work closely with Health Scotland and the national health service, which will continue to explore the matter.

Mr Ingram: I would be interested in receiving feedback on that work.

Mr Macintosh: The submission from Learning and Teaching Scotland states:

"Research in Glasgow seems to show the dip in attainment previously experienced at early secondary now happens earlier possibly because of earlier adolescence."

It would be interesting to hear more about that work. I am sorry to ask you to do more work, but could you send us the paper to which the statement refers, or information on it?

In our inquiry we have assumed that pupils at primary school are motivated but become demotivated at some point in the transition from primary to secondary education, but we have not focused on that period or on what lies behind demotivation. There is an assumption that the phenomenon is to do with the nature of secondary education as opposed to primary education, but we have not done much work on that.

The Convener: We have given the witnesses a bit of homework. Thank you for your evidence, which has been useful to the committee's inquiry.

I welcome our second panel of witnesses. Bill Maxwell and Alan Stewart are from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education. We were a little concerned about your arrival time, but you arrived just at the right moment. If you do not mind, I will not invite you to give an opening statement, because the committee wants to tap into your across-the-board expertise and ask many questions that will follow up on the evidence that we have heard.

I put this question to the previous panel. Discipline problems and problems of disaffection, which are luridly described in the press, are effects of poor pupil motivation. From your experience, can you give us a handle on the scale of the issue and the extent to which it is tackled by the positive approaches to motivating children and young people that good teachers and good leadership in schools can offer?

Bill Maxwell (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education): We recently published "A Climate for Learning: A Review of the Implementation of the 'Better Behaviour—Better Learning' Report", which considered pupil behaviour, motivation and disaffection, so we are in a good position from which to give the committee a handle on the matter.

The broad picture, which we wanted to get across to the press as well as to the profession, is that no epidemic of indiscipline or disaffection is sweeping across Scottish schools; indeed, in many schools, behaviour standards and motivation are very good. Nonetheless, a substantial minority of schools have issues. In broad statistical terms, in the past three years, about one in 12 of the secondary schools that we have inspected has had wide-ranging issues of ethos, discipline and behaviour that involved more than just one or two departments. Many schools have problems with some classes or a small group of pupils, but about one in 12 secondary schools and one in 30 primary schools had broad issues. It is clear that a small minority of primary schools have serious problems of disaffection and demotivation.

In secondary schools, in which we tended to focus a little more on causes and cures—although the issues are generic—it is important to note that causes do not universally relate to an area's characteristics. We found schools that did well on some standards in challenging circumstances, which is good to see. The message is that it can be done, even in some of the most challenging circumstances that schools face. The situation has an awful lot more to do with the quality of leadership in a school and the extent to which it takes a consistent approach to managing behaviour positively and developing learning and teaching in the curriculum positively.

The Convener: It is reasonably evident that any school can experience individual issues from time to time, but are you telling us that a direct relationship links good leadership, good motivation and the school ethos, which reduces the problem that schools, particularly secondary schools, sometimes experience?

Bill Maxwell: Yes—a direct relationship exists, particularly with leadership. I brought along Alan Stewart because he was our lead on pulling that evidence together, so I will ask him to comment on the background in a little more detail. We found key factors that underlie success, but much can be achieved by strong leadership, as I said. Some areas face bigger challenges than others but, even in challenging areas, success is possible.

Alan Stewart (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education): We found that the 40 per cent of our secondary schools that had very good leadership also had a very good climate and relationships and generally good pupil behaviour. The responses and views of teachers in those schools on management of discipline, respect between pupils and teachers and how consistently standards in their schools are upheld were much better than the national average. As Bill Maxwell said, that was true in schools in areas of social deprivation. For example, in one school in an area that has a high score on the index of social deprivation, all staff believed that indiscipline was dealt with effectively, that mutual respect existed between teachers and pupils and that standards were consistent.

As for the qualities of leadership, the first was a clear policy framework that linked behaviour management closely to learning and teaching and development of those, and which engaged staff in

development and implementation of policy so that they had confidence in it. Another feature was the setting of high expectations throughout a school. It is also important that senior management have a high profile around a school—staff often look for that. Such a profile comforts and reassures them and gives a lead for staff's involvement in dealing with inappropriate behaviour in the school or the playground.

Consistent responses on behaviour management were a strong feature in schools with good leadership, but less so in the other 60 per cent of secondary schools. In the 40 per cent, staff were confident that all senior management staff would consistently uphold standards, and the policy and framework for managing behaviour. Another feature of those schools was that they were socially inclusive, encouraged broad achievement and celebrated pupils' success, which was another lead from management.

Broadly, teachers should be helped to feel that the school environment is safe and secure for pupils; they should be confident that guidelines are clear and that they will be implemented consistently. There also needs to be focus on improving learning and teaching and on seeing that as an important part of the work of the school. A framework and environment for learning needs to be provided in which pupils are involved, in which they are encouraged to achieve and in which their successes are celebrated.

11:00

The Convener: That is encouraging. The committee's observation on its visits to schools is that we can almost smell a good school when we walk through the door.

Oddly enough, I was talking to a police officer in Glasgow the other day who told me that the police perceive that crime levels in the catchment areas of good schools seem to be lower than those in the catchment areas of schools that do not have such a good reputation and success rate. Is that anecdotal view borne out by your observations? I am thinking of such things as truancy rates and complaints to the school. Do you look at those issues as part of school inspections?

Bill Maxwell: Yes. That police officer's observation is borne out. The move towards integrated community schooling approaches is increasingly strengthening our observation that a school plays a lead role in its community, not simply in managing behaviour within the school bounds but in setting a tone and so on.

The best schools consult parents actively. In a sense, those schools serve a broader role in getting parents to become committed to standards of respect and the need to treat other people appropriately, which spills over into the wider community. Ideally, schools would do that with other agencies as part of a concerted effort.

Ms Alexander: I have two questions. First, does the inspection regime, focused as it is on school-by-school inspections, really let us get a handle on the quality of experience in the different environments in which the present cohort of pupils is being educated? I am thinking of specialist schools in that regard.

Last week, we heard from a specialist school that deals 100 per cent with children who have severe motivational problems. The witnesses spoke eloquently about the role of the inspectorate in inspecting them. The general approach of HMIE is to take a school-by-school approach and to tell us how each school is performing overall. Are we getting a like-for-like comparison of the experience of that cohort of children and how their problems are being addressed? Irrespective of the type of institution that pupils attend, how can you provide us with like-for-like comparisons in the future?

Bill Maxwell: The member is thinking in particular of the cohort of pupils who become detached from mainstream school for whatever reason.

Ms Alexander: Yes; I mean pupils who face significant disaffection and motivational issues.

Bill Maxwell: As the member will be aware, we inspect special schools. Increasingly, we are also inspecting projects that are half attached to mainstream schools. In the longer run, we are considering the possibility of doing neighbourhood inspections under which we would not only look at the primary and secondary school establishments in the area, but we would stand above that to look at the quality of interagency working that supports the most vulnerable pupils in the area. In that way, we can tie specialist provision directly to mainstream school provision in a locality.

Ms Alexander: You will see our challenge from a policy point of view. If our objective is for the children who are detached from the mainstream to achieve the best possible educational experience, and if there is no comparable evidence base that attempts some sort of like-for-like comparison, how will we know that the right decision is being made for any one pupil? Everybody says, "That's the HMIE's job." I suggest that you create an across-Scotland like-for-like comparison that can help people to reach judgments on the right location—mainstream or otherwise—for a particular child.

Bill Maxwell: Indeed. We benchmark nationally across schools that deal with similar issues. For example, we routinely look at a number of schools for kids who have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties and will compare and

encourage cross-comparison among those schools. Of course, assessment needs to be much more sophisticated than looking at just exam results and so on—as I am sure you are well aware. It is therefore more challenging to do, but we do it. We publish aspect reports occasionally, which consider all subjects. We recently published one on residential special schools, which is a way of cross-fertilising best practice as well as of showing where we are finding the most common weaknesses in mainstream provision.

Ms Alexander: My slight reservation about your submission is that it consists of seven reports that we should all read. It leaves the impression that your role is to observe rather than to police or enforce. It may be that your role is to produce reports that suggest good practice but not to police or enforce, which leaves parents with the question "Whose job is it to ensure that any one child's educational experience is not unduly disadvantaged by the disruptive behaviour of others?" It may not be your job, but clarity over ownership on that issue is important. Some of the evidence has said that it is HMIE's responsibility, but your submission is all about seven reports that suggest good practice and no mention is made of your being the owners of the problem. How do we think through that issue of ownership?

Bill Maxwell: Our role is one of transparent accountability and, through that process, we hope that we drive improvement. Ownership of decisions about individual children must rest with local authorities, which are responsible for individual kids in that way. We help to support that process directly by publishing reports on the various provisions that local authorities may use outwith the main stream as well as in mainstream schools. In recent times, we have published a number of critical reports on provision, particularly in respect of kids who have been pulled out of mainstream education for behavioural reasons and have ended up in inadequate project-type provision that has a denuded curriculum. We make that clear, and local authorities need to respond and to improve that provision.

Ms Alexander: You talked about the accountability mechanism. What is that?

Bill Maxwell: Local authorities make provision for individual pupils; we hold them independently to account for the quality of provision. I would extend that even to independent schools. When a local authority places a child in an independent school it should maintain responsibility for ensuring that what it is doing is appropriate, that it is sending the child to the right place and that it monitors the quality of what is happening in that school. It must not abdicate responsibility for a child by funding the child in an independent school.

Ms Alexander: We have heard previously that under the new HMIE inspection regime the expectation would be that a school would be inspected once during a child's primary career and once during a child's secondary career. Is there the same frequency of inspection for special schools and for children who may be proving disruptive at school and are therefore impacting on the educational experience of their peers?

Bill Maxwell: The same generational cycle applies to special schools and provision for primary and secondary pupils.

Alan Stewart: We should also be clear that as part of that cycle we have a range of follow-through arrangements for every inspection so that, according to the needs of that school and its capacity for improvement, we will return to that school on the back of the inspection that we did. We will have given main points for action. In schools where there have been important weaknesses we will have fairly regular involvement with the authority and the school to help them to create an action plan.

After a year, we might pay an interim visit to find out what progress has been made and to discuss the situation further; in any case, we will certainly return for a final or what might in some cases be a second visit. We remain in contact with a school; after all, we want our evaluations to improve it. Although we provide advice through the action plan, we also encourage the school to make the improvements that we want to be made and will not disengage until we are satisfied that they have been made. For example, we have been monitoring the progress of schools with important weaknesses on which we reported in "A Climate for Learning", and they are making improvements according to the main points in our action plan.

Ms Alexander: Last week, we heard that some of this cohort of students would be expected to spend less time in school and more time with Right Track, Fairbridge and other projects or in a further education setting. Does inspecting that provision, which might account for 50 per cent of the students' educational experience, fall within HMIE's remit or is it the responsibility of another statutory agency?

Bill Maxwell: That clearly falls within our remit. For example, we will sometimes carry out aspect tasks, in which we get an overview of the success of a type of provision that might be emerging across the country by visiting various places that provide it. Moreover, when during our normal school inspection programme we come across a school that is making significant use of such provision, we will dig a bit deeper and carry out an audit trail to find out whether such programmes have been effective and whether they are well monitored.

It is clear that links between schools and colleges will expand in this area. As a result, we are reviewing our approach not only to school inspection but to FE college inspection to ensure that we have a joined-up way of inspecting the quality of that provision. That will allow us to comment clearly on whether pupils are benefiting from going to college half a day a week or whatever.

Ms Alexander: It is always helpful for a submission to refer us to seven other documents. However, because you sit at the centre of that nexus, I wonder whether you could submit some supplementary evidence on what works and what does not. Many people who have testified to the committee have a sense about what works in their little patch, but they are also very keen to have an overview of the evidence in the seven documents to which you have referred. I am sure that one of those documents will tell us about what works, but some supplementary evidence that draws those elements together would be much appreciated.

Bill Maxwell: We can do that.

The Convener: Last week, we heard evidence from Right Track, Fairbridge and Spark of Genius, each of which takes a slightly different approach to this matter and perhaps has slightly different catchment groups. I realise that evaluating and comparing their approaches would be quite difficult, and I dare say that there is no single answer in that respect. Nevertheless, it would be useful to receive a comparative evaluation that highlights which approach definitely has a track record of success, which is a bit more iffy, which applies to a certain category but not to another category, and so on. Although there is good practice across Scotland, a lot of money is going into a wide range of different projects. We need to know from a public perspective whether they are working, whether we should go in one direction and not another and whether that is already covered in your reports.

Bill Maxwell: It is hard for HMIE to be definite about whether the approaches that are taken by Right Track, the on track programme and other such projects are right, wrong or whatever because many of them are quite small scale and have been introduced only recently. Indeed, in many cases, there might well be a mix, because some approaches might work for some kids but not for others. That said, we have published reports on such programmes; for example, we carried out a specific report on Spark of Genius that concluded that its approach had potential.

I take the committee's point. We can easily extract from the numerous reports, particularly "A Climate for Learning" and the previous report "Count us in—Achieving Inclusion in Scottish Schools", summary tables that highlight key factors for success. In "Count us in", which we published three years ago, we tried to encapsulate what a modern, 21st century inclusive school is about and the key characteristics of an inclusive schooling system that would take us beyond a system that is all right for most kids most of the time towards something that caters for all kids' needs.

The Convener: That would certainly be helpful.

11:15

Mr Macintosh: I had the same question so I will not pursue it. However, I would like you to expand on one point. We are hearing slightly conflicting evidence about whether there should be a greater role for the centre or greater flexibility at local level. We are being asked about both those options and they do not necessarily conflict; flexibility in the curriculum and allowing teachers room to motivate are not bad things, but leaving schools to continue to disappoint their catchment is not a good thing, and we have to get the balance right.

Are we getting the balance right between national guidance and local control? A lot of expectation and many duties are placed on HMIE. Is it the body to deliver the changes or should we look more at organisations such as the pupil inclusion network Scotland, which the Executive is still developing, and the partnership working of LTS and so on? Are we going to use the stick of HMIE or the carrot of the other organisations—if I may describe you as a stick?

Bill Maxwell: Nationally, we are rightly moving from a position where approaches throughout Scotland have been pretty uniform, and we are encouraging flexibility. In some respects, that has been quite slow to take off and sometimes the—quite wrong—expectation that HMIE is looking for something formulaic from schools can be a brake in the system.

We are keen to state up front that we are encouraging intelligent, sensible and responsible use of flexibility in the curriculum to meet the needs of wider groups of pupils more effectively. In that context, we also need to be the conscience of the system. Our role is to evaluate independently and with an open mind the provision that evolves on the ground in response to local needs and to ensure that it serves the best interests of the pupils who receive it. Some of the ideas about the flexibility of the curriculum could be backward steps if developed wrongly. For example, there might easily be divergence back to a relatively crude version of vocational as opposed to academic pathways, which might not serve the needs of kids who are channelled into vocational pathways. We need intelligent, forward-looking

approaches to embedding vocational aspects into a modern curriculum.

HMIE's role is to encourage and promote where we see promising good practice emerging but equally, to help people to work through the criteria that need to be applied when they depart from the traditional pattern of the curriculum to ensure that they are not selling short the interests of a generation of kids just to take a fashionable approach.

Mr Macintosh: Will the driver be things such as the pupil inclusion network and the partnership working that LTS is doing to allow heads to form communities and speak to one another, which we heard about earlier, or guidance laid down by the minister? Where will the national guidance come from, or are we already there?

Bill Maxwell: Guidance on principles and the test to apply when adjusting the curriculum will be appropriate. Undoubtedly, the curriculum review follow-through—developing the curriculum for excellence—will reset national guidance on the curriculum over the next few years. However, there need not be a push for that to be prescriptive.

To some extent, we want to encourage head teachers to take increasing ownership of the rationale for the curriculum that they present in their schools within broad guidelines that offer national safeguards for the system and we want to empower heads to make local decisions in a context of intelligent accountability.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have three brief questions, the first of which is about parental involvement. How can the parents of disengaged pupils be encouraged to participate in school life and support their children's learning?

Bill Maxwell: Parental involvement is one of the key things that helps in schools that are improving motivation and behaviour. Our review of integrated community schools considers the matter as well. I ask Alan Stewart to make one or two comments from the detailed evidence, but I start by flagging up the fact that the introduction of home-school link workers is a significant development. We often hear positive comments about such workers and we are encouraged by what we see. Many schools are appointing people who actively form bridges with harder-to-reach parents.

Schools need to do more to make themselves accessible and welcoming, and they can do a lot to try to encourage parents into the school. We should bear it in mind that many parents have bad memories of their schools and did not have particularly successful experiences there, so there is often a hurdle to overcome. There is a new category of home-school link workers, who are appearing in various forms in many schools. They are able to go out to homes and local communities and engage some of the harder-to-reach parents in a more positive way.

Alan Stewart: I echo what Bill Maxwell said about the introduction of home-school link workers. That is a key strategy to engage parents, particularly those of disaffected pupils. Such engagement is important at the pre-school stage and in the early stages of primary school. There are often social problems in the family, and home-school link workers can help parents to understand how they can best help their children. I am thinking particularly of the nurture groups scheme that is run by one or two authorities, which includes support for pupils in the early stages of primary school and helps them to manage their anger. It also engages their parents, and the support and counselling that they receive often help them as much as their children. That engagement needs to continue throughout pupils' school lives. It is not that they become dependent on that help; the support and help can continue, and the evidence that we have shows that it is successful.

Parents can be involved in other areas, and schools and local authorities can probably do more to involve them in the work of the school and of the children who are disaffected.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My second question is about the re-entry into the system of pupils who have been temporarily excluded—or pupils who have been permanently excluded, for that matter, although there are far fewer of them. What constitutes best practice in that area?

Bill Maxwell: Best practice involves a positive engagement with the parents and the pupil about what is expected when the pupil returns, whether the engagement is verbal, written or whatever. I hesitate to use the word "contract", but there should be a detailed discussion about what went wrong last time, with a focus on the solution. That includes what the pupil needs to do to re-engage effectively and what support the school or other agencies can provide to ensure that that happens.

Alan Stewart: It is also important for exclusion to be seen as an important feature of the stratagem, among other sanctions. We found that in schools that are good at promoting positive behaviour and have a good regime of behaviour management, exclusions are understood by pupils and parents to be a severe sanction. That sets a context, and when pupils re-enter school after exclusion their parents take the negotiations seriously.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My third question is on permanent exclusions, which are obviously few and far between. If the head teacher, rather than the local authority, had the

right to exclude after considerable disturbance, what would the effect be?

Bill Maxwell: It is difficult to speculate about exactly how that would work. In the Scottish context, the local authority continues to have responsibility for the pupil. I know that circulars ceased to use the term "permanent exclusion" as such because the process actually involved a case conferencing procedure around a crisis whereby alternative placement for the pupil might need to be found. It is vital that the head teacher and the local authority are part of that discussion. If the child is going to move away from a school, the local authority has to find a constructive, good-quality alternative as soon as possible. It is vital that all that be done as part of a managed process. It would not be helpful to have a process wherein authorities could find themselves suddenly having on their hands a pupil with nowhere to go without a discussion having taken place about what provision might be appropriate for the needs of the pupil.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Is that a question that has been addressed by the inspectorate?

Bill Maxwell: It is. We considered the issue when we produced our report on alternatives to exclusion, which focused on exclusion procedures and ways of avoiding excluding people. A small number of exclusions will occur each year but, when they do, it must be accepted that they are a bit of a failure of the system, which should have been able to intervene earlier to stop that problem happening or should have seen the problem coming and made a managed move before the crisis point was reached.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, but if there is such a failure of the system, should not the other pupils be allowed to proceed effectively with their learning?

Bill Maxwell: Consideration must always be given to the rights of the broad mass of pupils in the school. We would not advocate pushing back into the classroom disruptive pupils who are unable to cope in a mainstream classroom without sufficient support. That would not be good practice and we would be critical of it.

Alan Stewart: In "A Climate for Learning", we recommend that all authorities have access to off-site provision for the few pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour and, despite the number of good strategies that schools use to give them additional support, are still not coping in the main stream and are disrupting the learning of others.

Dr Murray: Earlier, you referred to integrated community schools and the review that you did at the end of last year and we have heard other evidence that suggests that such schools are good at bringing together professionals and voluntary workers who are able to support young people and their parents. However, your submission says:

> "the approach has potential, but there is still some way to go to get good practice consistently embedded in practice across Scotland in ways that might generate significantly improved outcomes for children."

I was not quite sure whether the good practice that you mentioned was good practice between integrated community schools or whether you meant that the integrated community school model was itself the good practice.

Could you say a bit more about what the barrier to the roll-out of integrated community schools has been and how it might be overcome?

Bill Maxwell: To some extent, the integrated community school model has suffered in many areas from a perception that it is a separate project that should run alongside other services in education and social work. It has been perceived as an add-on that can deal quite well with a few individuals who have particular problems by enhancing provision for them but which should not affect the usual practice of teachers in the school or social workers in the area. That meant that it was not becoming embedded in wider practice.

As we move into the roll-out phase, there is more scope for the integrated community school model to become embedded, but the matter requires considerable thought on the part of mainstream school leaders and other professionals, who must work together. The integrated community schooling approach has very much come together with the broader integrated children's services agenda. Children's services planning is feeding down through the system from local authority and health board level, and the integrated community schooling approach now has a logical place within local communities. In the autumn, we will publish a self-evaluation guide that will make much more explicit to schools, their partners and local communities how they might measure their success in embedding the approach into everything that they do and take a more holistic view of what integrated community schooling can achieve for them. That sweeps up a lot of the other initiatives. There has perhaps been a tendency to see a lot of initiatives as being separate, although they all feed in together. Things such as personal learning planning are very much part of the agenda.

11:30

Dr Murray: Do you have any specific recommendations for our report? Do you have any suggestions about pupil motivation or about ways in which we could help disaffected children, which

would tie in with the development of that sort of approach?

Bill Maxwell: The approach is not especially prescriptive; it encourages local partners to arrive at local solutions. The big recommendation would be to drive understanding of the approach and the roles of teachers, social workers, health workers and others by having all the front-line staff seeing themselves as working towards a shared set of objectives at the local level. That is what authorities need to focus on achieving. They need to take the integrated community schooling approach beyond being a project to something that is understood by and embedded in the practice of all front-line staff in an area. Our report "The Sum of its Parts?" contains some specific recommendations, which we can make available to you separately.

We are in quite a dynamic process. The Executive plans to issue further guidance on its vision for the roll-out of integrated community schooling in the autumn. There will be a number of practical obstacles such as the availability of social work staff, which has been a problem in some areas. However, moves to correct that and the review of social work practice and the role of the social worker should help to improve the situation.

Dr Murray: On a slightly different subject, I would like your comment on evidence that we were given in the previous session. We were told that the pressure that target setting could place on a school could be transferred to the students, as a lot of assessment is required. We were told that there should perhaps be less assessment and more valuing of achievement. What is your response to the idea that there should be less assessment?

Bill Maxwell: Yes, we would encourage that general line of thinking, which the curriculum review is specifically pursuing. As a member of the review group, I am signed up to the argument that we should move towards a system that is a little more selective about the points at which assessment is made. We certainly should not introduce more formal assessment earlier and earlier in the system.

The notion of giving more formal recognition to pupils' broader achievements is also helpful. Over the past two years, we have adjusted our inspection reports to comment specifically on the broader achievement of pupils as well as on exam or test results. Through our inspections, we are attempting to encourage schools to recognise that as important.

Dr Murray: Are there specific examples of good practice from your inspections? Have you found any especially successful ways of celebrating pupils' wider achievement?

Bill Maxwell: There are many and varied ways. We often comment on activity that is going on in the arts and cultural activities, and we note any community service involvement. Schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's award and the Caledonian award encourage appropriate activities and foster genuine motivation to achieve. "A Climate for Learning" describes how, beyond the formal exam system, less motivated pupils have often been helped by award schemes such as Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network schemes, which sit separately from the standard Scottish Qualifications Authority system.

Alan Stewart: Schools are becoming good at recognising and celebrating success and broad achievement, as we note in "A Climate for Learning". As Bill Maxwell said, we have started to report on broad achievement, which reflects well on schools. A consideration of HMIE reports enables the reader to appreciate the range of endeavours that schools have developed to involve pupils and encourage broad achievement. Schools celebrate success in many ways: at assemblies, which are regularly used for that purpose and represent an important public celebration of success; through awards systems and certification, which are valued; and by notifying parents of successes. The celebration of success confers status on pupils and their achievements.

The Convener: During our inquiry, we have heard about parity of esteem—the matter is not entirely unconnected with the matter that we are discussing. The term is usually applied in the context of the relationship between academic subjects and more vocational ones, but the committee heard evidence that we should not just bung children who have difficulties into vocational streams. Wider options should be available to such children. Do you have useful observations on the matter? Educational and career choices must not be distorted and we need to demonstrate that there is value across the range of subjects and career choices, so different choices can be equally valid—that is an important subtext to our inquiry. What are the key issues in that regard?

Bill Maxwell: It is important to avoid the traditional, crude thinking that regards the streams in which the least academic kids are placed as vocational and the academic streams as somehow non-vocational, which is clearly not true. Advanced higher physics is vocational for rocket scientists, just as some further education courses are vocational for other professions.

The determined to succeed agenda, which is part of education for enterprise, is helping to reshape thinking, because it introduces from very early in primary schools the idea that all pupils can think about vocational subjects and the world of

work and enterprise. We should stick with that approach. Courses are starting to be established, such as the schools for work courses that will be piloted, which crystallise thinking on the matter, and there are other approaches to vocational provision. It is important that such courses develop in a wide range of areas, which are relevant to kids of all abilities and interests. A schools for work course on health care might well be as good for kids who want to become doctors as it would be for kids who want to enter other health care professions. Many older pupils try to secure work experience outwith school to increase their chances of getting into careers that are regarded as very academic, so we must break down the barriers and develop courses in ways that are broad and stimulating, so that the courses are not just regarded as quick ways of putting pupils into vocational pigeonholes at an early stage in their school career.

The Convener: Do members want to comment?

Mr Ingram: No. The evidence was interesting and covered a great deal.

The Convener: I thank the witnesses for their evidence. We are grateful for your input and expertise. We have asked you to come back to us on one or two points and if you want to make further observations to us, we would be keen to have the benefit of your experience. HMIE has a unique ability to assess what is happening throughout Scotland. The committee needs that perspective to inform its inquiry.

Bill Maxwell: Thank you. We will be happy to come back to the committee on those points. On Wendy Alexander's point, I presume that we can extract from reports summary points that identify the key factors for success.

Ms Alexander: And, if there is evidence, tell us. If there is no evidence, say that too. People talk about things being evidence based, but nobody is better placed than you to determine whether there is any evidence. Clarity on that for report drafting would be enormously helpful.

The Convener: That is right. There tends to be a bit of assertion in this field that is not necessarily backed up.

Additional Support for Learning (Code of Practice)

11:40

The Convener: The minister is coming at 12.00, so I would like to deal with item 3 now. We have a draft report before us, which was prepared following the committee's earlier discussions. In fairness, some of the matters were dealt with by Lord James Douglas-Hamilton's letter and the response from the minister, but we have a fairly substantial report in other respects.

Paragraphs 23, 24 and 25 relate to the relationship between personal learning plans, individualised educational programmes, records of needs and co-ordinated support plans. Those paragraphs do not properly capture the tone of the issues. We are no longer concerned with the "50% of children"—if that figure is indeed right—mentioned in paragraph 23 who would have had a record of needs but who will not have a CSP. We are concerned with the practical needs of working through the different documents and how they all work together.

We had the handicap that there was not yet much information available about how personal learning plans would work. That was the central point. Do colleagues agree that the slant is wrong? The issue is not so much insufficient emphasis on personal learning plans as insufficient information and the need for the draft code to be clear about how the different plans relate to one another. We were not entirely satisfied with how the draft report covers that. Will the clerks be able to reformulate that bit?

Martin Verity (Clerk): If that is agreed, yes.

The Convener: Are there any other general observations on the draft?

Dr Murray: I have a couple of points about transitional planning, which we referred to last week and which Futureskills Scotland has raised with me. First, there should perhaps be a more explicit statement in the code about the role that Careers Scotland can play in supporting young people with additional support needs at transition. The second point—which I did not pick up until it was pointed out to me—is that chapter 5 of the draft code says that the process of seeking information

"must be started no later than 12 months before a child or young person is expected"

to leave school. However, during the discussions on the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill, it was made fairly clear to us that those duties should have been fulfilled no later

than 12 months before a child or young person is expected to leave school.

The Convener: The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 says that, I think.

Dr Murray: Yes, but the code does not; the code implies something slightly different.

The Convener: That is right. Well spotted.

Mr Macintosh: I have a number of points to raise. First, on paragraphs 5 and 9—

The Convener: Of the report?

Mr Macintosh: Yes.

The Convener: As opposed to the code.

Mr Macintosh: Paragraphs 5 and 9 of the draft report. I beg your pardon. Paragraph 9 talks about the

"decision to produce a user friendly version of code of practice for parents and young people".

I do not remember discussing that in those terms. We have had a discussion of the full code and I am confident that the full code begins to meet our concerns. However, I am concerned about paragraph 9 in particular, which says:

"The committee fully endorse the Scottish Executive's decision".

The Convener: The background to that is that the code was designed to be a working document primarily for the use of professionals as a resource. Parents and others would have much more limited acquaintance with the code—they could be referred to the full code, but there would be another, more user-friendly document that they could pick up. That is what the minister said that he was producing.

11:45

Mr Macintosh: I have no qualms about that being a good thing do, but we have examined the full document at length and I am confident that it does what it is supposed to do. It is certainly on the right lines. It is true that we fully endorse the Executive's decision, but we do not endorse fully the abbreviated document, which might not be as clear.

The Convener: We said that we fully endorse the document, but it has not been produced yet.

Mr Macintosh: Yes, but will we see the shortened document? Has it been made clear that the full document is freely available to parents should they want to read it?

The Convener: Right, both those points are good. They should be put into the report. The wording is okay, but it needs that addition: we shall want to read the document to enable us to comment on it. Nothing will prevent the full document from being available. Do those two answers satisfy you?

Mr Macintosh: Yes. Absolutely.

Mr Ingram: Is the user-friendly document the one that was produced by Enquire?

Mr Macintosh: That is a different document. The work carried out by Enquire is useful, but the abbreviated document has yet to be worked on, which is why I was anxious about it. I understood the draft report to be saying that we endorsed the document.

The Convener: That is right. Do you have other points to make, Ken?

Mr Macintosh: Yes. I do not understand paragraph 11. It states:

"there will be a resource provided … for the proper professional scrutiny of requests to the external independent adjudicator."

I do not understand to what "a resource" and "the external independent adjudicator" refer.

Mr Ingram: The point is about the need to take oral evidence in addition to written evidence, depending on the circumstances, I think. It was felt that some people—parents, in particular—might be disadvantaged if they were not used to producing written material as evidence.

The Convener: The issue was slightly wider than that. The report refers to the decision whether, in fact, a valid request was made. I do not mean only in terms of its style, but the criteria for going for independent adjudication. That was the point. It was said that things would be carried out at ministerial level—not by Euan Robson, but by Executive officials at the appropriate level.

Mr Ingram: Yes.

The Convener: I asked whether the adjudicator or someone else should undertake the action instead of there being another formulation.

Mr Macintosh: For what would the request be made?

The Convener: A request would be made for independent adjudication. We are talking about the adjudication system.

Mr Macintosh: The draft report does not say that. There is nothing wrong with the paragraph. I am sure that it is accurate, but I do not understand it.

The Convener: Those issues arose out of Lord James Douglas-Hamilton's letter, which said that validation of requests for further adjudication falls to Scottish ministers. The paragraph developed from that text. You are right, however. Perhaps the

matter could be clarified under a subheading such as "Validation of requests for independent adjudication".

Mr Macintosh: Paragraphs 16, 17 and 18 of the draft report do not quite capture our argument. They certainly do not capture what I meant during our discussions. Two different points are made in paragraph 16: the availability of speech and language therapy and what level of therapy would qualify as significant. That important point was raised by Philip Kunzlik and several others. The helpful long submission by Sense Scotland outlined the issues perfectly.

Paragraph 16 of the draft report states:

"The Committee note that there remains a suspicion among parents".

We should say that suspicion remains among "some parents". If possible, a line should be added to that statement. The code and the 2004 act specifically try to get away from confrontation between parents and local education authorities. The act and the code do not recreate the tensions that bedevilled the record of needs system, in which the record of needs became a device to lever resources out of the system. The new system is based on the idea of provision across the board for all children with additional support needs. Although the demarcation point relates to a co-ordinated support plan, the point is that we are trying to get away from the idea of CSPs just replicating records of needs and being the only way for parents to access resources. It is important to state that. I suggest adding the words "some parents" and saying that the committee also recognises that the code tries to avoid the confrontational approach between parents and education authorities.

The Convener: The aim is to avoid a confrontational approach and using a CSP as the basis for accessing resources.

Mr Macintosh: Exactly—that should be spelled out, as I said. I agree with paragraphs 15 and 18, which say that an explicit statement should be made that assessment of a child's needs should be independent from resources, but that should be accompanied by the idea that a CSP is not a device to guarantee resources.

I do not think that paragraphs 17 and 18 are right.

The Convener: The third sentence in paragraph 17 is not quite right—there is something wrong with it.

Mr Macintosh: I am concerned not just about that sentence, but about the whole meaning. I have noted—although I am not sure whether I can read my writing—that the written evidence highlighted a related concern about the significance of the role of health services, particularly access to speech and language therapy. The trouble with making shorthand notes is that they cannot be read afterwards.

Depending on how it is read, the code could imply that one child's requirement for a speech and language therapist once or twice a week was not a significant need, yet anybody who knows about the system would say that that was a very significant need. That is a question of how the code is read. I agree that if a school or a class, rather than a child, accessed a speech and language therapist once or twice a week, that might not be a significant need. Sense Scotland's submission says that. We should return to Sense Scotland's submission, which captured the matter, as did Philip Kunzlik. That would be sensible.

The Convener: What is relevant is not so much concerns and all the background as the committee's view that the code should reflect the fact that speech and language therapy issues ought to be significant. Do we want to phrase the comment as strongly as that?

Mr Macintosh: The code steers away from describing exactly the threshold for qualification.

The Convener: However, it gives examples.

Mr Macintosh: It gives examples, but it is difficult to know what the example about access to speech and language therapy means. Access to speech and language therapy is difficult, because the service is usually provided by a health authority rather than an education authority. The point is crucial. My concern is that we do not make clear enough what is expected of health authorities. The matter brings resources to the fore.

We must say what we expect to qualify as significant and therefore to qualify for a CSP. I disagree with the last sentence of paragraph 17, which says:

"There is the possibility that this might result in … downgrading".

We should say that slightly differently. We should say that that position could create a disincentive and therefore might lead to downgrading of a child's significant support needs to avoid preparing a CSP. That could be flagged up as an anxiety, but we cannot say that that will definitely happen, because that does not follow.

Ms Alexander: I will suggest a way forward. We are not trying to redraft the code.

The Convener: Absolutely.

Ms Alexander: We are encouraging the Executive to revisit the code's ambiguity. I tried to redraft the text of paragraph 17, but we should say that we believe that the current code could be

better drafted to affirm individual children's right of access to therapy services and, in so doing, to alleviate parents' on-going concerns. If we took that approach, we would simply invite the Executive to redraft that bit of the code in light of those concerns, without saying whether they are appropriate.

The Convener: I should point out that the current examples that have been given do not provide any clarity.

Ms Alexander: Exactly. As a result, the best contribution that we can make is to invite the Executive to redraft the code in that light.

The Convener: I also suggest that we put the second sentence in paragraph 18 in bold. I realise that that might well happen with some of the recommendations, but I think that one or two other points in the report should certainly stand out.

Mr Ingram: The problem of access to and availability of therapy services has been highlighted by either Philip Kunzlik or Sense Scotland. At the moment, those services are simply not there and the problem is that appropriate organisations might suggest support that was based on what was available rather than on what ideally should be available. To be fair, we should acknowledge that the minister realised that that was a problem and said that he had undertaken to delete the paragraph that mentioned therapy services or used such services as an example.

The Convener: That is helpful.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have a number of very brief points, two of which refer to drafting. Paragraph 4 mentions "25 November" but does not give the exact date in February when the consultation closed. It might also be worth adding to the end of paragraph 6 the number of comments that we received.

In paragraph 29, it might be useful to add after the words

"revisit the issue with Universities Scotland"

a phrase such as "and the Association of Scottish Colleges and other interested parties". That is what the ASC wants. Universities and colleges should be subject to the same obligations to help those with additional support needs, but their status as independent bodies must be recognised. Such institutions have excellent structures in place for those who have additional support needs and are co-operating effectively in that respect. That might be a drafting point, but it is very important to them.

I hope that we can agree to delegate authority to the convener to approve any final changes to the text of the report to be published next week and that we can establish the precise date on which it will be published.

The Convener: Before we move on, I want to draw members' attention to a letter from the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care—

Mr Macintosh: I am sorry, convener, but I want to make another few points.

The Convener: I am not bringing the item to a close; I will come back to you in a moment. I simply want to draw attention to two points that emerge from the letter, which has emerged from the Health Committee's consideration of the Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Bill and concerns sight tests for children of school age and below school age. I should point out that the Health Committee is looking at that issue in a slightly different way.

The minister's letter refers to the importance of the normal sight test, which takes place when children start school, and the need to pick that test up later if it is missed. If such an assessment is carried out as a matter of routine, it should check difficulties with eyesight and accompanying problems. We should perhaps adapt certain references in our report to take account of the minister's letter. I assume that the Minister for Education and Young People will take on board the fact that ministerial links will help with that important issue, which echoes the problem that we uncovered about picking up things later on if they have been missed.

12:00

Mr Macintosh: I think that my colleague Kate Maclean is lodging an amendment to the Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Bill to that effect.

I turn to funding responsibility and dispute resolution. Paragraph 22 refers to

"the development of a simple system for resolving funding disputes".

I would prefer to say that we should have a simple system that clarifies to local authorities their responsibilities for funding before funding disputes arise. That sentence continues:

"and for establishing procedures to avoid conflict between authorities."

I am looking for specific guidance saying who should pay. That does not mean having a mechanism to resolve who pays once there has been disagreement. The Executive's guidance should be clear in saying who should pay up front.

The Convener: I was looking at that with more of a gimlet eye, as a Glasgow representative with concerns about what the implications might be. We require clarity. I am not sure that I know what

the precise arrangements are. That issue needs to be sorted out and made clear so that children can get a place in some other local authority. Perhaps other things could happen after that—the whole issue gets complicated when the children go on to secondary school. One imagines that there must be clarity behind the scenes, but we need to be clear about it ourselves. Ken Macintosh's proposed correction will help.

Mr Macintosh: The only cases of which I am aware are those where there is not clarity.

I do not agree with paragraph 26 of the draft report. We did not hear evidence on the issue. The point was raised, but I think that it is more a reflection of the how the matter is reported in the newspapers. I do not think that paragraph 26 does justice to the Association of Headteachers in Scotland's concerns. It puts all the emphasis on resources, which was not quite the association's point.

The Convener: That goes back to a point that I made earlier. I wonder whether paragraph 26 could simply be deleted. The matter is dealt with, albeit in a slightly different formulation, elsewhere.

Mr Macintosh: The topic is important, but I do not think that that wording captures the points that have been made.

Paragraph 30 is headed "Transitions from record of needs". I am not sure that it was the right solution

"to include this information as an annex to the code of practice".

Did we discuss that?

Mr Ingram: That is what the minister said.

Mr Macintosh: He said that he was going to do that, did he?

The Convener: Yes, he did. He said that he thought that there was a separate document covering that.

Mr Macintosh: Of which we had a copy.

The Convener: That was why the annex to the code of practice was mentioned. It was to add that information in for the sake of clarity and openness.

Dr Murray: Is that not still under consultation?

Mr Macintosh: It is, yes.

The Convener: I think that it is and I think that the draft report reflects that. That seemed to me to be a sensible way to progress.

Let us note those additional changes. Are members happy for me to finalise the draft report, or shall I get it sent round by e-mail?

Members: Yes.

The Convener: Yes what? Do you want me to finalise it?

Mr Ingram: E-mail it round, please.

Mr Macintosh: E-mail it, please—although we trust you.

The Convener: Okay. I will work on it with the clerks and we will send a version round. When does the draft report have to be finalised?

Martin Verity: We want to get it done as soon as possible, convener. The final deadline is 20 June. We want to get the report out well before then, however.

The Convener: We should manage to do that within a day or two, given the stage that we have reached. Thank you for that.

Before we hear from the minister, let us take a five-minute break, for the usual purposes.

12:04

Meeting suspended.

12:10

On resuming—

The Convener: I welcome Peter Peacock, the Minister for Education and Young People. There is quite a serious supporting panel: Ruth Campbell is the policy manager of the Scottish Executive pupil support and inclusion division; Laura Joyce is a policy officer in the same division; and Philip Rycroft, whom we have met several times, is the head of the schools branch.

I believe that you want to make an opening statement, minister, but I urge you to be fairly brief because we are quite tight for time this morning.

The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock): I will try to do that convener. I just want to give the committee the context of how the Executive approaches motivational issues. That might help with some of the questions that members want to ask.

I have been following at a distance what the committee has been doing and have read some of the evidence. Obviously, the inquiry has the potential to be very wide ranging. I want briefly to address three questions. First, what evidence do I have about motivation or demotivation in the school system? Secondly, is the motivation of head teachers, teachers and pupils of concern to me? Thirdly, what am I doing to address any concerns that I have?

What broad indicators do I have at my disposal to show whether the system is motivated or not? There are several issues. Do we struggle to recruit teachers into the system? The answer to that is

no; we turn away far more people than we take. The recruitment of teachers is up by more than 30 per cent in the current year, compared with previous years.

Are teachers retiring early in droves and are they desperate to get out of the system? The answer is no. There has always been a high level of early retirement; that is part of the nature of the profession and the demands that it makes on people. Is the retirement rate increasing dramatically? No. There is no significant change in the trend.

Are more kids staying on in the system, or do they leave at the first opportunity? The answer is that marginally more are staying on. Slightly more girls are staying on than boys. The figure for boys is static and the figure for girls is increasing slightly, but there is no overall rush to get out of school, compared with previous years.

Are more kids taking exams in the fourth, fifth and sixth years? The answer is yes. As a proportion of the whole school population, more pupils are sitting exams. Is attainment in the five to 14 age range improving? For the majority, it is. There has been improvement of up to 20 percentage points in some test results for that age range.

Are more pupils leaving the system with no qualifications? No—fewer are leaving with no qualifications. There has been a marginal improvement in the right direction.

Are more kids getting good qualifications out of the system? Yes. More kids are getting five or more qualifications at level 5 before they leave school than was the case in the past. Again, it is a marginal gain, but no one is arguing with it.

Do pupils feel satisfied with their school experience? The recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development study shows that, for the most part, they do. Seventy per cent get on well with their teachers; 86 per cent thought that their teachers were interested in them; 90 per cent thought that their teachers would give them more support if they asked for it; and 85 per cent had a sense of belonging to the school. There are many positive indicators.

However, some indicators point in the other direction. The same OECD study showed that 27 per cent of kids in Scotland did not want to be in school. That is better than the OECD average, but it is still a significant number. Fifty-six per cent—marginally higher than the OECD average—said that they often felt bored at school, which is clearly a concern. Thirty-one per cent felt that they were never given interesting homework.

What other evidence do we have? Last year, 21,000 pupils were excluded from schools in Scotland. That represents only 3 per cent of the school population but it is still a significant number that is not to be ignored. Most of them were boys, and many were repeat offenders—they had been excluded more than once.

Our latest figures also show that 19 per cent of pupils had tried truanting. We do not know whether that figure is rising or falling or is static, because this is the first time that we have collected these statistics. However, on the face of it, it is a significant number. Nine per cent of our pupils account for 90 per cent of our unauthorised absences. The problem is concentrated, but if someone is truanting they are clearly not motivated to be at school.

12:15

The biggest issue is that the national tariff score for the 20 per cent of pupils who are the lowest attaining in our system has not really shifted in recent years. While other pupils are improving their performance, the performance of that bottom 20 per cent is pretty static. The statistic represents about 12,000 kids, a significant number of whom come from the most deprived communities in Scotland.

Overall, we have a generally positive education system. A quick summary of the evidence to the committee is that kids are reasonably well motivated, although there is a clear problem at the bottom end of the system. Also, with the majority who are performing well and who are well motivated, all the anecdotal evidence from teachers and parents is that some could be better motivated and could get even more out of the system. In international terms, we are performing well, although not as well as some other countries are. Obviously, motivation is a factor in that.

My second question was whether the motivation of those who are in the system, including teachers and pupils, is of concern to me. The answer is that that is one of our key concerns. Poorly motivated pupils, teachers and head teachers perform much less adequately than they would do if they were well motivated. A huge number of our current actions are designed to address that motivational issue, which is the third issue that I want to touch on.

We are addressing the issue through a range of key drivers. At present, the main driver that underpins our actions is “ambitious, excellent schools: our agenda for action”, a policy document that came out at the back end of last year. The aims that are set out in that document include setting high expectations for the system as a whole and for individual schools, local authorities and pupils; ensuring that we give a higher priority to thinking about and investing in leadership as a

key resource in the system; radically reforming the curriculum and giving teachers more flexibility and more choice about what they teach and when; and placing more trust in teachers and head teachers by giving them more professional discretion and more freedom. Another aim is to have more personalisation of learning to try to turn education from a largely production-based system into a personalised one. That will be a huge challenge, but it is necessary if we are to tackle motivation issues and plan kids' learning better.

Another dimension of the reform programme is the aim of providing more choice for pupils about what to study, when to study, what exams to sit and when to sit them. We also aim to remove clutter from the curriculum, by which I mean subjects that we do not need to teach in the way that we did in the past. That can create space for other opportunities, such as music, sport, drama, enterprise education and other subjects that we know are motivators for kids. If kids experience such subjects and enjoy them, they will stick in the system and take other subjects. Rather than encourage just the academic stream, as we did in the past, the programme also aims to open up more vocational options and to give greater respect to such options as clear, legitimate and desirable outcomes for young people to pursue. We are taking a range of measures through our ambitious, excellent schools programme.

Other key drivers are initial teacher education for the next generation of teachers, and what we are doing to equip teachers to improve performance and to motivate pupils more effectively. We are trying to improve student placements and we have radically improved probation for the profession, so that teachers now have a structured probationary year, which helps to improve teaching practice. That relates clearly to motivation. We have also changed the approach to continuing professional development, with the aim of developing classroom skills. A hugely important point is that teachers' craft and their pedagogical style are critical to kids' motivation to learn.

One big measure that we are taking that receives little public attention—it is a quiet revolution inside Scottish education—is our assessment is for learning programme, which is founded on the belief that learners learn best when there are clear but high expectations of them; when they receive quality feedback on how well they are performing through the use of formative assessment techniques; when advice is given on how to improve performance; and when the learner has a high degree of participation in setting the learning objectives and targets that are to be achieved, which gives them individual ownership of their learning. The programme is having a profound impact on classroom practice—one need only meet the teachers who are on it to realise how it empowers them and provides new ways of working.

I could mention other important drivers, such as parental involvement and how we share best practice. Below all that work, we also promote many individual initiatives by individual teachers. In her evidence to the committee, Ruth Campbell mentioned 17 or 18 distinct programmes. We regard those as programmes that support teachers and widen their repertoire by providing them with a choice of techniques that they can use in schools and classrooms to motivate pupils more effectively.

There are big drivers of change and support for motivation. When I go round schools, I am struck by the enormous variety of things that teachers do that help to motivate pupils. A rich tapestry of activities goes on in our schools, from foreign trips to good enterprise education, sport, music and the choir. Hundreds of things are happening that help motivation.

That is all I want to say in giving the committee some context. Pupil motivation is important to me. We are doing things that at their root are about improving motivation, because if we get that right the performance of the system as a whole and of individual pupils will be that much better.

The Convener: Thank you. That was helpful. The committee is trying to get a general picture of the system and to home in on bits of the system that could work better or policies that are not achieving what they should.

I will begin—as I have done previously—by trying to get an idea of the scale of disaffection and discipline problems in schools. They attract a lot of media publicity, yet on our school visits they are not the issues that come through. As I said earlier, I suspect that you can smell a good school as you go through the door, because of the general attitude. Do you have a feel for the extent of the problems in schools and the extent to which they are dealt with not by penal sanctions but by positive measures, such as leadership and motivation, which are exactly what we are looking at in our inquiry?

Peter Peacock: Those are among the thorniest issues that I have to deal with, because I have to address the real and, in some places, intensifying problems in some schools. Those problems are: the nature of societal change; kids running away from home; kids living in drug-abusing and alcohol-abusing families; kids living in homes where there is massive domestic abuse; and kids living with mental health and emotional problems, which are becoming more apparent in our society. All the objective evidence shows that those problems are intensifying and that they do not stop at the school gate but come right into the school. I

recognise those issues and acknowledge that, day by day, teachers in many schools face a lot of low-level problems, and that in some schools they face high-level problems—not every day, but occasionally. We are doing a range of things to address those issues.

I have visited dozens of schools and, as I have said privately, I do not think that I have ever left one—well, perhaps one—without being overwhelmed and genuinely inspired by what I have seen. You meet the most fantastic young people and great teachers. You meet well-motivated kids who are sophisticated in their understanding of society, what their role is, what they can do and how they are learning. They are doing really positive things. Most schools that I visit are havens of calm, reason and good order. That is not to say that schools do not have issues to deal with—there are low-level problems, as teachers keep reporting, which is why we are taking so much action.

Are we aware of the facts? Today, we received from HMIE its follow-up study on "Better Behaviour—Better Learning", which showed that one in 30 primary schools and one in 12 secondary schools have more pronounced problems than others. The convener and I visit schools and we see the differences. We know what works in relation to disaffection and behaviour improvement. If all the things that I am speaking about are working in a school, the situation is better than if they are not working.

Fundamentally, it comes down to good leadership in the school. That is not just about the inspired individual leader; it is about the person who empowers and liberates their staff and pupils. Pupils can be part of the leadership of the school and take responsibility. The other day, I was in a school that is setting out its expectations of its pupils and where the pupils are setting out their clear expectations of the staff. The deal in that school was that staff had to behave appropriately to pupils as much as pupils had to behave appropriately to staff. That was explicit and understood.

When a school has rules that are clear and which pupils and staff believe are fairly applied, there is better order. When staff are motivated by the actions of the head teacher, teachers motivate pupils better and the school performs better. Other things that will result in schools that are havens of calm, reason and good order are flexibility in the curriculum—provided that it is used appropriately—the existence of lots of school clubs and the provision of more parental support than average.

That is not to say that something will not happen in those schools. Our entire history of experience of school life tells us that young people are challenging. From time to time, fights and all sorts of things will happen. It is a question of dealing with and minimising such situations by improving motivation and bearing down on disaffection. The HMIE report showed that problems can be dealt with when all the right measures are in place. That is why schools of similar type in different communities perform differently. We must keep addressing the situation in schools in which such measures are not fully in place. That is one of the many purposes of inspection.

The Convener: The difference between schools is interesting. The potential exists for schools in areas that face significant challenges to do more than they sometimes do at the moment.

Ms Alexander: Minister, your remarks were enormously helpful, as we have been struggling to bring the evidence to bear on our inquiry. It was useful that you focused on the evidence, but I still have a few questions, which might involve your writing to us.

You talked about the relatively small number of pupils who are seriously struggling—I think that you mentioned that the lowest 20 per cent amounted to about 12,000 pupils. There is an issue on which it would be helpful if officials could provide clarification. Pupils can be motivated only if they are at school. The fact that a small number of pupils simply do not turn up means that they cannot be motivated. It might be helpful if officials could write to us with some trend analysis of how many pupils are consistently not at school and whether the distribution is even across Scotland or whether there is a concentration in particular areas. That information would be helpful.

You mentioned that we know what works, but I think that only those who are at the centre really know what works. You also spoke about the rich tapestry of activity in our schools. During our inquiry, the committee has heard about many parts of that rich tapestry and has listened to everyone asserting that they have got it right. On the back of what you have said, perhaps you could write to the committee with the Executive's view of what works. I am sure that that will reflect what you have said today about the craft of teaching, the role of initial teacher education and the assessment for learning programme. It would be helpful to find out about your view from the centre of what works. The committee has got a wee bit lost in the rich tapestry.

The Convener: Do you want an indication not just of what works in the minister's view, but why he thinks that it works, which would involve reference to the research background?

Ms Alexander: Yes.

Peter Peacock: We will be happy to provide the committee with more material on that, to the extent

that it exists—such material does not always exist. A few days ago, Philip Rycroft and I talked about how interesting it is that although billions of pounds are spent on world education research, no one has the perfect solution to everything. If they did, we could all retire and the system could run itself—God forbid. We will provide what evidence we can. As I have described, we know from good practice what is working in Scotland.

A weakness in Scottish education has been that we are not good at sharing good practice; my experience in other portfolios and in my past life tells me that that is a weakness in Scottish public service generally. A striking feature of the education system is how isolated an individual teacher in their classroom is from the rest of their school. That is where staffrooms and CPD are important. I am making efforts on reducing class contact time and providing more time for activities such as preparation, discussion and marking. Schools are isolated from other schools and—I do not mean this in an offensive sense—local authorities traditionally look to themselves and what they do within their boundaries and do not look beyond those boundaries often enough. That is understandable.

12:30

One of the interesting and dramatic post-devolution changes in education and, perhaps, in other aspects of the Executive's life is that we increasingly find ourselves saying that we see things from the centre that others do not necessarily see, albeit that we do not always see them as clearly as others sometimes see them. However, we need to help to oil the wheels of the system and share best practice. Ruth Campbell does an awful lot more work than anyone in previous generations of Scottish Office civil servants on getting out and speaking to people, networking with them and connecting them. We have a potentially bigger role to play in all that but, equally, local authorities have a role, too, as do professional organisations such as the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland.

I will get Philip Rycroft to comment in a moment but, before he does so, I will pick up Wendy Alexander's first point and give the committee what we know about the lowest 20 per cent. There are clear patterns. I do not know whether Ruth Campbell has the figures handy, but looked-after children's life chances are substantially diminished, compared with other children's, simply because of the fact that they are looked after. Looked-after children who live in a community with a high entitlement to free school meals have even worse life chances than looked-after children who do not live in such communities. There are another two factors: one is to do with single parents, but the other escapes me. A child who faces a conjunction of those four factors has almost zero life chances, to be frank. We know where such communities are and we know the concentrations of deprivation that have an impact.

The school meals statistics that we put out yesterday show that although there is a higher average take-up of school meals in areas that have a high number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, those who are most entitled are not taking up free school meals nearly as much as they should, because they are off sick, because they are truanting through being disaffected, or for health reasons. Philip Rycroft and I have just come back from some intensive discussions on how we can do more to address the spatial concentration of educational disadvantage in Scotland. The matter is complex but, on the face of it, the evidence is so clear that we must do more about it in future.

Perhaps Philip Rycroft would like to pick up the point about shared practice.

Philip Rycroft (Scottish Executive Education Department): The minister mentioned our changing role at the centre. It is far more about creating networks, getting information to flow round them and finding increasingly sophisticated means of doing that. When the Scottish schools digital network comes on stream, it will be a very powerful instrument for making knowledge and information flow round the system.

It is also about attitudes to policy making. For example, we went about the assessment is for learning programme by consulting widely, working with people on where we wanted to get to and then running a series of pilots to work out what worked. However, we did not run the pilots; teachers did that, so the practice was developed in the classroom and the conversations were teacher to teacher. The momentum behind that programme is down to the fact that the foundation was laid in the classroom. That sort of model will inform the way in which we develop the curriculum for excellence. We will not impose a view from the centre; it is a matter of taking out ideas and the clear sense of direction that the curriculum for excellence now gives us and allowing teachers to develop the good practice so that there is ownership of it in the schools.

I will say one other thing about the richness of what we have. Because HMIE is in and out of schools every day of the week, examining closely what goes on in them, it has an enormous database of good practice. It spreads that good practice through documents such as "How good is our school" and "Count us in", which consider good practice on inclusion. It is also working on pulling some good practice together under the heading "What makes an excellent school?" to put

the capstone on the array of extraordinarily rich material that is accessible to teachers and schools.

The Convener: There has been support for champions of particular issues, such as eco-schools or the primary schools in which French is taught. It is the job of a particular teacher to lead such initiatives with a bit of enthusiasm, which seems to have worked quite well.

I was struck by the emphasis on staffrooms, because I have heard that, in one or two of the new schools that we have been building, staffrooms have been missed out. If that is the case, I would echo the ministerial suggestion that they should not be missed out.

Peter Peacock: I visited a school that is in design—I will not say where—and that was one of the issues that the head teacher was trying to reconcile that day; I know which way he was leaning. Staffrooms have negative impacts as well, but they have the potential to be overwhelmingly positive as a way of getting isolated people together.

A couple of weeks ago, we discussed the nature of the Finnish education system with people from Finland. We will have more such discussions because of its interesting aspects. Among the key features that make the Finnish system a success are the way in which teachers behave in a collegiate fashion and the research disposition of individual teachers. As part of their professional task as teachers, they share good practice with colleagues. They believe that such action is the reason why performance improves and remains at a high level. Teachers should have the opportunity to develop practice collectively. Bringing teachers together for such purposes within a school is of huge importance.

Mr Ingram: That example emphasises your earlier point that the quality of school leadership is absolutely crucial to establishing a school ethos, building a team of teachers and empowering both the staff and the pupils within a school. Can you explain your systematic approach towards lifting the levels of school leadership throughout the country?

Peter Peacock: In the past, we had not identified leadership as a key issue, but we have now identified our approach as a clear, major priority for the future and we intend to focus attention on it. From our own personal experience and the evidence that we receive from inspections and so on, we all know that, when a school's leadership changes, the institution transforms utterly within a year. The atmosphere and motivation change and the system performs so much better.

We know that leadership is crucial to how schools operate and we understand what gives rise to that. There are many factors to what constitutes a good leader. Leadership operates in different ways. We are receiving support from the Hunter Foundation for our ambition to develop leadership within our system so that it is the best in the world. We are willing to go anywhere to find people to help us with that task in Scotland. Furthermore, we want people in Scotland who understand our aim and who are working extremely well to share such their experience with their colleagues more effectively.

We intend to invest more money in our project. Over the coming period, we shall invest several millions of pounds in leadership development. In the past wee while, we have been part of the Columba 1400 initiative in Skye, which is one manifestation of how we can concentrate resources and allow people to reflect on their practice and share experiences with others. Almost without exception, the people whom I have met who have taken part in the initiative have come back refreshed, with new perspectives and new goals. Sometimes, such experiences have resulted in the head teacher, other members of the management team and, indeed, pupils—the whole school—having a joint vision of how to refashion the school.

We have a Scottish qualification for headship and we are about to review the standard for headship required to achieve that qualification. We want to open up more routes so that a leader's competence is recognised. We want to create more choice and opportunities for head teachers so that such outcomes can be achieved.

We hope to develop a programme whereby we can spot the next generation of leaders. From where will they come? What attributes can be spotted early in their career and how can those attributes be nurtured and developed to provide more opportunities?

We talked hitherto about creating a leadership academy in Scotland, but that may not be the right title because it implies that only one place would be involved, whereas we intend to use resources to set up a distributive network of opportunities for people. I think that we are about to advertise for the head of the network. A small team will pool together resources and drive forward the project. During the next few days, we want to publish a discussion document that will explain how we want to flesh out our ideas for leadership in consultation with head teachers and others in the profession. We want to know what they are looking for and to make sure that we share the same objectives and can agree on how to push forward the project. Having identified the opportunity for such action, we are beginning to make the necessary

investments and to put things in place to make our aims more coherent and consistent.

Philip Rycroft may want to deal with any points that I have missed.

Philip Rycroft: I will add one point. We are considering a number of bids that have come in for the schools with ambition programme. One of the common features of a lot of those bids is the question of leadership. That will give us another rich source of ideas and practice, which will be evaluated and spun out round the system. It is another tremendous opportunity for us to develop this line of thinking.

Mr Ingram: A lot of new thinking and work are obviously going into this. We have been trying to address the question of teacher motivation and careers over the past five or six years, particularly in the light of the McCrone agreement. How does your developing thinking on leadership link to the principles on which the McCrone agreement was built, or are we looking beyond that agreement? If you could flesh that out for us, that would be helpful.

Peter Peacock: In a sense, there is no direct connection. We came to our conclusion about leadership independently of reaching our conclusion about McCrone. Having said that, lots of aspects of the McCrone settlement were designed to deal with the question of motivation.

When I was the Deputy Minister for Children and Education, in the first session of the first Parliament, we were on the verge of a national strike. All the negotiations with the teachers and the employers—the millennium discussions, as they were called—had broken down and there was a huge lack of trust on both sides. We were heading for absolutely dire trouble, which is why the McCrone inquiry was launched. We wanted to ensure that the teaching profession was better rewarded and better respected and that it had the status in society that it ought to have.

Teaching is, arguably, the most important job in society. It is the foundation on which everything else is built, and teachers deserve respect for the role that they carry out. However, we had got to a point at which that was not recognised in teachers' conditions of service, and teachers felt beleaguered. We have tried to turn some of that around, but there is still a lot to do. Part of that work will be done through our curriculum reforms. A lot of that is about saying to teachers, "You are the experts in education. You are trained professionals who have undergone long years of training to get to where you are. We want to give you more trust in what you do. We want to trust your professional judgments in the broad frameworks that we make." That is one way of restoring trust in the profession and giving it the respect that it deserves.

All those things are part of the McCrone settlement and are growing out of it. The chartered teacher route has started, and we are considering how the role of chartered teachers in our schools might develop. Do chartered teachers have a leadership role? The answer is that they probably do, which connects chartered teacher status to the leadership agenda.

More widely, we think that the investment that we are making in leadership is right and necessary, and we will continue to make it. As we go through the debate, we will have to keep making connections between the classroom teacher and leadership throughout the whole system. A very powerful set of connections are necessary.

The Convener: I assume that you are working with the Scottish Educational Leadership Management and Administration Society. You and I attended an inspiring SELMAS seminar dinner one night a few months ago, and Judith McClure, the president of SELMAS, has appeared before the committee. They seem to be people whom it would be well worth using as champions of that concept.

Peter Peacock: Absolutely.

The Convener: There have been changes in the levels of promoted posts as a result of the McCrone settlement. I have received complaints from a number of people about the way in which local authorities are moving towards a faculty-type system and knocking out a layer of senior subject teachers. That sounds a little bit like taking away a stratum of the potentially motivated, dedicated leadership that we need, especially as people with subject knowledge are involved. Does the Executive have any views on that quite complicated issue?

Peter Peacock: Philip Rycroft will keep me right on this, as he is the joint chair of the tripartite arrangement that we now have between the local authority employers, the trade unions and the Executive, which manages all the detail.

The McCrone agreement did not require management change of that kind, but local authorities have seen an opportunity, for logical reasons, to bring about that change at the same time that other changes are taking place. I am aware that some of that has been quite controversial—especially for those who feel displaced. During the job-sizing exercise that we undertook, a lot of people told us that they felt that their contribution to their schools was not receiving proper recognition. There have been a lot of rumblings in the system about both the job-sizing exercise and the promoted posts structure. Those

are, principally, matters for local authorities to determine.

Our evidence—from feedback from the unions as well as from other sources—is that the changes have been handled differently and better in some places than in others. I have had evidence of concern about faculty management, but I have also had evidence about improvements that faculty management has brought about, because the focus is on management rather than just on the subject. I have spoken to people who have said that they feel better managed as a consequence of being part of a faculty because they are being challenged, stimulated and supported in different ways. However, I recognise that that is not universal, and we will be having further discussions on that. Philip Rycroft may be able to say a bit more about the detail.

12:45

Philip Rycroft: There is not much to add. The teachers agreement took out three layers of management: assistant head, assistant principal teacher and senior teacher. That required some change in the system, then job-sizing impacted on all of that. Clearly, issues will arise as we go through what are pretty major changes. As the minister said, the impact of that varies greatly by school and by authority. A lot depends on the level of consultation, engagement and so on with teachers about those changes. A test of that is whether people are saying that we should go back to what we had, with a promoted post structure that could involve 50 or 60 per cent of the staff in a school, where there was equality among the principal teachers—irrespective of the size of their departments—and where the focus was not on management and developing the school. No one that I have encountered has said that we need to go back to that system; however, it is inevitable that as we make changes we are going to run into teething problems. Local authorities and schools will take time to learn about what works best, but already the evidence is beginning to come through.

To link back to my earlier point about dissemination of intelligence around the system, the teachers agreement communication team—a shared enterprise between the Executive and local authorities that is based in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities—is working extremely well. It provides a great opportunity for authorities to learn about what other authorities are doing, to pick up that good practice and to develop it in their own systems. As an innovation to encourage learning in the system, that work has been hugely beneficial.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have a question for the minister about bureaucracy and the concern that has been expressed by teachers that the administrative burden on them is sometimes so great that it is difficult for them to concentrate on planning the innovative and differentiated lessons that they would like to teach. What action can the minister take to reduce unnecessary burdens on teachers?

Peter Peacock: I regularly say to teachers, "Tell me what you're confronting that is burdensome and we'll look at what we can do." We have no interest in overburdening people with bits of paper if we can possibly avoid it. Some of the feedback that we get through the system is necessary to help us to discuss policy issues such as those that we have just touched on, but there is no particular desire to do that. We have recently been carrying out an internal communications audit that examined how we communicate with the system at local authority level and what happens between the local authority and the school. That has uncovered quite a lot of practice that we want completely to re-examine, not only because we are probably putting out more paper than we require but because we are not putting it out in a way that is sensible to teachers, to head teachers and to local authorities. We need to consider a lot of that, and we are in the process of working out in detail how we will manage it, with the intention of trying to reduce burdens on the system.

However, one of the key things that we are doing and which teachers regard as a burden relates to curriculum matters and to our intention to de-clutter the five-to-14 curriculum. We wish to ensure that teachers do not feel under pressure to teach everything in the voluminous guidance that has been issued over the years. In fact, we can thin that down, and we can give teachers more freedom, more choice and more discretion about what to teach, when to teach it and when to pause and go into things at greater depth than they have had the opportunity to do in the past. At some point we need to ensure that we have an eye on how teachers are using that freedom and whether choices are opening up for pupils as a consequence of the freedoms that teachers have. That will to some extent change the nature of inspection in the future—it will feature in future inspections.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does it follow from that that every attempt will be made to try to simplify complex, intricate and detailed processes with a view to trying to assist teachers?

Peter Peacock: Absolutely. As I said, I have no desire to have unnecessary bits of paper flying around the system. We genuinely want to free up teachers. Post McCrone, one thing that made a big contribution—we intend to keep moving in this general direction—was that we put more support staff into schools to free teachers from other tasks

so that they can teach. Many thousands of people who previously did not work in schools now provide that help within the education system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: How will the McCrone agreement's long-term impact on teacher motivation be assessed?

Peter Peacock: There are several levels to that. As part of the McCrone agreement, mechanisms were put in place to keep reviewing where we have reached and whether we are meeting all our targets so that we can continually refresh our thinking. HMIE and Audit Scotland are part way through a pretty major evaluation of McCrone and of the impact that the agreement has had. I am not sure when the report of that evaluation will be available—perhaps my officials will clarify that.

Philip Rycroft: It will be about a year before all that evidence comes through and is published.

Mr Macintosh: The committee's inquiry has been very encouraging, as it has allowed us to look at schools in a positive light and to consider what works rather than focus on problems.

Although good complementary things are clearly happening at local and national level, the national framework or guidance—if it exists—within which motivation is encouraged or led has so far eluded me. When the HMIE witnesses answered this question earlier, they suggested that their role was to encourage good leadership and good practice at local level. In other words, motivating pupils is ultimately the job that HMIE encourages teachers to do. However, I suspect that there is still a role for guidance or a national framework within which teachers would be not so much told what to do—obviously, that would demotivate them—as given access to the best practice that has been promulgated.

To what extent does that happen already? Perhaps the minister will comment on the pupil support and inclusion network, which was flagged up earlier in our inquiry but has proved elusive when we have tried to find out anything about it. What are his hopes for the pupil support and inclusion network? It might even be the holy grail of motivational guidance that I asked about. What will the inclusion network achieve? Is there any other mechanism by which the Executive leads or supports motivation within schools?

Peter Peacock: There were several dimensions to that question. On the pupil support and inclusion network, I suspect that we had best give the committee a note about precisely what the network is and what it does. However, as I understand it—Ruth Campbell will keep me right—the pupil support and inclusion network mainly tries to bring together people from around the schools system, from the voluntary sector and, beyond that, from other forms of organisation. The aim was to bring those people into a network to try to open up their understanding of what each does and to help them to provide opportunities to schools.

When I go round schools, I find that I often act as vehicle—a very inefficient one—for sharing ideas because I say, "I saw such-and-such in another school. Have you tried that?" Very often, I get a blank expression and people reply, "Oh, I had not heard of that." The idea in question might be, for example, a Barnardo's project in Edinburgh or it might be about how to bring back to school the kids who are on the margins, such as those who are or are just about to be excluded. Other examples might come from work that is carried out by organisations such as Fairbridge. I cannot share that information around the system, but HMIE and other people including local authority advisers and directors of education can network to ensure that such information is shared.

I am pretty clear that we have not done enough of that kind of thing and that we need to do more. The key is to provide opportunities for human interaction. Many things can—and will—be put on databases or published in good practice documents but, as well as continuing to do all that, we must also provide more opportunities for sharing. The continuing professional development commitments that came out of McCrone will in part allow many more such opportunities in the coming years, compared to what happened in the past. In part, it has to be about what works in certain situations within subjects or within the management of a whole school. More opportunities will be required and we hope to be able to provide them.

Among the things that we have done on pupil behaviour during the past 18 months is provide opportunities for round-table discussions with relatively small groups of head teachers, one or two of whom make a presentation about what they have tried and what works for them. The others use that to share and explore how they might do things in their own schools. We need to create more such opportunities because there are not enough of them in Scottish education.

Does that mean, however, that we will issue lots of national frameworks and guidance on how to do things? No. What we are doing is more about creating opportunities. That said, we are doing big things about pupil motivation and engagement that do take the form of guidance. The curriculum review is the best example of that. One of the explicit objects of the curriculum reforms is to improve motivation and engagement, which is why we have structured the reforms as we have and are trying to be more focused about what we do while trying to give teachers the opportunity to use their professional skills. We are very clear about

motivation and guidance and what helps to contribute to that in the form of guidance for the system.

Philip Rycroft: While we are on the subject of the curriculum review, members will have seen the framework. I will read from the principles for curriculum design. The first one is headed "Challenges and enjoyment". It states:

"Young people should find their learning challenging, engaging and motivating. The curriculum should encourage high aspirations and ambitions for all."

That is one of the absolute founding principles of the way in which we will carry out the detailed work of the curriculum review. The new guidelines will reflect that so that motivation, engagement and enjoyment are bedded into everything in the curriculum and the learning experience will provide the national infrastructure or framework that will support the rich and different learning experience in different parts of the system.

Mr Macintosh: I welcome what you say. The curriculum development work, the determined to succeed initiative on vocational education, the schools of ambition programme and the leadership programmes are all designed to address the issues that we are considering. Perhaps the one thing that is missing is somewhere that teachers can turn if, for example, leadership breaks down. What do teachers do in the absence of leadership? We do not want them to be floundering so it would be useful for them to have somewhere to go.

Last week we took evidence from Fairbridge in Scotland, Spark of Genius and others and it was quite clear that they did not know how to evaluate themselves against anyone else. It would be good to have such a framework.

Peter Peacock: You make a good point. I was speaking at a recent conference about my experience and about bits of things that I had seen in schools. A head teacher asked why I do not create a website of good practice into which they could dip. Part of the schools digital network will help to create just such a repository for that information, hopefully in such a way that it is interactive.

I will say more about the comments on enterprise education. There are structural initiatives, such as eco-schools, which is a fantastic and amazing programme that really motivates kids and gets them involved in aspects of learning in which we did not necessarily get them involved in quite the same way previously. There is guidance about how a school can become an eco-school and the factors that give rise to more motivation. Very similar things are happening in enterprise education in the structured approach to how it is rolled out. There are such frameworks at that level but there is not yet enough about Mr Macintosh's other points.

There is something in what Mr Macintosh said about self-evaluation. As part of what we expect of local authorities when they are considering performance improvement, they have to help to benchmark their schools against schools in a family group of like schools elsewhere in Scotland. They can compare how their school is performing with a similar school elsewhere, and they can ask how schools are achieving things that they are not, or why their school is achieving more than similar schools. The aim is to help the process of professional evaluation of schools' performance and to allow schools to set their own targets and make progress. The self-evaluation approach is a large part of the inspection process, although it needs to grow in the future.

13:00

Mr Macintosh: I have a final point on which you may wish to comment. I welcome your evidence about the whole system, given that we are looking for evidence about the numbers that are involved and about ways of evaluating different programmes of motivation. However, we are in danger of overlooking the children who attend school and who are not the most disengaged, but who are there in name only and are switched off. We provide a lot of support for children who are at the bottom end, but the children who attend school and do not truant—

The Convener: They are there in body, but not in mind.

Mr Macintosh: Exactly. Our systems do not seem to pick up on such children.

Peter Peacock: That is a good point. In my opening comments, I said that there is, among the majority who are performing well, a group of children who could perform better—teachers tell me about them constantly. One admirable feature of teachers is that they get annoyed and angry when they know that a pupil has potential, but they cannot quite find the key to unlock it, although they try. Many discussions go on in schools about how to capture and engage individual pupils.

Last summer, I visited a hugely impressive project at Jordanhill School, where there is a summer school that the University of Strathclyde runs specifically for young people who, around the end of second year, show signs of not reaching what their teachers know to be their potential. They are assessed as being able to reach a certain level—for example, they could do standard grades at credit level—but it is becoming obvious in their third year that they will not achieve that. Clearly, motivational factors are involved. By the end of the summer school, the kids are engaged

again. They are hugely enthusiastic and highly motivated because of that new and fresh experience. The outcomes of the project are still to be fully researched, but the anecdotal evidence is that the kids go back to school better off as a consequence of their summer experience and begin to perform to their potential and get better qualifications.

Recently, the head teacher of a school that I visited told me about a girl who was clearly able, but who was disengaging and becoming troublesome. She was a brilliant singer and a wonderful musician, so they did a deal with her such that she would get to sing a bit more and produce a compact disc provided that she gave a commitment to certain classes. That worked brilliantly—she is now singing beautifully, composing and creating good music and is much more motivated and sticking in at her lessons. There are hundreds of examples of teachers using a repertoire of measures to try to engage kids more. Teachers need to keep doing that and we need to keep allowing them to do it.

At the root of the curriculum reforms is the aim of creating space for a more individualised approach to learning to suit individual circumstances. We should not keep kids in learning situations from which they will not benefit and in which they are not engaged; we should allow them to engage more with their enthusiasms in life and what might interest them, although we must ensure that they cannot opt out of the core elements of learning, which are literacy and numeracy. We should not underestimate the myriad measures that are being used in schools to keep people engaged and to stretch and expand them, widen their horizons and keep them enthusiastic. However, we need to keep working at that to find new and exciting ideas.

The evidence to the committee shows that one of the challenges of modern teaching is that kids experience sophisticated stimuli outside school, including ones that involve technology. One can understand why kids disengage when their experience in school does not match their experience out of it. I was in a classroom recently in which an electronic white board was used to teach a French class. The engagement that resulted from using technology interactively—the experience was similar to that which one would get with a computer game at home—helped to motivate the kids. A lot of work is being done, although we need to continue to focus on the issue.

Philip Rycroft: We must take care to ensure that nothing in the system maximises the chances of kids of falling out of it. From our work on the curriculum review, we know that there is a loss of pace in learning in S1 and S2 and that kids begin to disengage at that age. As a result, we are deliberately looking at the S1 to S3 experience to find out how we can configure learning in a way that keeps pace and richness and that gives kids the opportunity to explore interesting things. Such an approach will maximise the chances of engagement at systems level. Kids can fall into and out of being engaged and motivated; however, as I have said, we know that there is a problem in S1 and S2 and the curriculum review very much focused on fixing that situation.

The Convener: The approach that is taken at Jordanhill School, which I visited last summer, is very worth while and matches some of the points that have been made. If any committee members are interested, we could certainly set up another visit.

Dr Murray: I want to ask about home-school links, because home is an extremely important factor in pupil motivation. The HMIE report entitled "The Sum of its Parts?", which came out at the end of last year, indicated that although the integrated community school model has a lot of potential there are difficulties in embedding best practice throughout Scotland. However, this morning, we heard evidence that integrated community schools are about to be rolled out and that new things are happening as a result of better children's services funding. How is the Executive responding to that HMIE report?

Peter Peacock: You are absolutely right to highlight the importance of home-school links and to point out the variation in practice throughout Scotland. We can provide the committee with statistics but I can point out, for example, that some local authorities have one home-school link worker for every 30 schools, while other authorities have one per school. Such variation is a result of individual schools' circumstances and, to some extent, their geography. Nevertheless, this is a real issue that must be addressed.

A good home-school link worker can make a profound difference to the ability of the very youngest pupils—or of any child, for that matter—to engage in a school. They are a very important resource; indeed, I think that over time they will become more and more important. For a start, such links ensure that parents, particularly the parents of kids who are not fully engaged, have an enhanced role in the educational experience. I have seen some fantastic practice that shows that home-school link workers are making a colossal difference to the motivation not only of pupils but of parents, and to the support that parents can give. Clearly more needs to be done on that front.

Of course, on your point about integrated community schools, one feature of a good integrated community school would be good home-school connections that involve more than

one home-school link worker. However, although I have seen enough fantastic examples to know that such schools can really work well, the model is just not working in enough places. When we rolled it out, our expectations were too lax. We need to be more explicit about what we expect from an integrated community school and about what integration means. HMIE is helping in that respect. For example, it is about to publish a document that might be entitled "How good is my integrated community school?" which will give people a self-evaluation tool.

Moreover, the concept of integration is also caught up in the new excellence standard and the six-point quality indicator scale that we are about to introduce. Can schools be excellent if they are not integrated? The answer is that they probably cannot.

We still have to overcome huge cultural barriers between the different professions that work in and around schools and, over the next few weeks, members will see some things about the planning and delivery of children's services in the round that point to more rather than less integration.

We will have to redouble our efforts to ensure that we are explicit about what is expected. What do we mean by "integration"? What are the modern expectations of how to support children and take a holistic view of their lives? That implies much more integrated working in all our schools in the future. The teachers and head teachers whom I bump into are up for that. For the most part, they want that to happen. Where we have seen success it has been very good. We must ensure that it is applied more consistently across the system.

Dr Murray: The Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association was critical of aspects of communication with parents about their children's achievements or problems. Do you have a view on whether communication with parents is a problem and, if so, how to tackle it?

Peter Peacock: Yes, I have a view. We want to improve and extend communications. Connecting teachers with parents when there are concerns is not without its challenges, given the time that is available, particularly in secondary schools. However, good teaching and management practice determines that the quicker the teachers connect with the parents to address a child's problems, the more chance they have of engaging the parents and sorting out the problems. Lots of teachers and head teachers spend a lot of time with parents trying to resolve difficulties as quickly as they can.

We are interested in exploring in our discussions with people in Finland how they structure parental involvement, because parental involvement seems to be at a higher level there. For example, parents appear to be entitled to a certain amount of time with teachers each year. Equally, it is expected that parents will be available when teachers want to talk to them. We are interested to see how that works.

We have much further to go in involving parents in schools effectively, not just in a representational sense, but in a direct sense in supporting their children's learning. That is partly about having much more effective feedback. Going back to assessment is for learning, I believe that learning improves when there is good feedback and when that feedback is supported effectively. That must be one of our key objectives.

Mr Ingram: Careers Scotland's research indicates that pupils with clear career goals focus better at school and achieve more of their potential. According to Careers Scotland, the other side of the coin is that too many people down the years have fallen into their careers with limited awareness of their own potential and of the opportunities that exist. Indeed, as a lot of our visits and the evidence that we have received have shown, there is a lack of self-confidence. People need to have the skills to plan their careers. There appears to have been a big gap in that area in schools. Will that feature in your plans for curriculum reform, because it is an obvious area in which we can do a lot of work?

Peter Peacock: I am slightly hesitant, because I am not an expert on when the optimal time is for a person to begin to focus on a particular career or a range of careers, as doing so might narrow their learning. I need to take more advice on that. However, I completely agree that, where there are clear goals and support and where expectations are high, a person will perform better. That underpins our assessment is for learning programme. It is all about people having ownership of their learning, setting goals and managing their learning much more effectively. Clearly, that has implications for particular career directions and interests. It is also part of personal learning planning, as opposed to the personal learning plans process that we are engaged in promoting. It is about pupils setting objectives for themselves, working at the routes that they have to follow to achieve those objectives and having high expectations of themselves.

As part of our schools of ambition programme—we have yet to decide exactly how we push this forward—we want to examine whether there is a way to strengthen engagement between the careers service and schools, primarily to address some of the questions that have been raised. We want to work out the optimal relationship between schools and the careers service. Can we strengthen that? Can we ensure that the right

advice is provided at the right time to help with motivation and direction? There will be more discussion on that area, which we wish to focus on.

13:15

The Convener: I have two brief points, the first of which is on parity of esteem. Given that the issue is wide ranging, I do not expect to receive an answer now. It has several ramifications, such as how it is supported, the measures involved and examinations. Perhaps you can come back to us with some documentation or input on the subject and explain how the matter should be taken forward.

It seems to the committee that parity of esteem underlies many of the issues that we are dealing with, such as motivating young people and making sure that there is almost an automatic choice between different strands that may traditionally have been regarded as being academic or vocational, or involving soft skills. We need to strike a balance rather than taking the traditional approach, whereby a person wants to be a doctor or lawyer, for example, as if those are the top jobs. Is there a view on how that whole agenda can be tackled across the board? I accept that that is not easy. Can you give us detail of any work that is being undertaken?

Peter Peacock: You raise a very interesting point. I was in Brussels the week before last and it was fascinating to meet representatives of other countries and to discuss the impacts on our systems of vocational learning versus academic learning, if that is the right way in which to characterise what is happening. Other countries in Europe take a different approach from ours and have more parity of esteem between vocational learning and traditional academic learning.

It was also interesting to note that, in some countries, the vocational and the academic are separated so that, at school level, people have the choice to undertake vocational work and academic work and can move between the two streams of learning. In some ways, our recent schools-colleges review seems to represent the target that some countries want to achieve. Yes, we have much more to do to make it clear that choosing vocational work is not a lesser option. It is a different option that suits particular people and their circumstances. It also suits our societal needs. More needs to be done about that.

I believe that—this is perhaps slightly more controversial territory—something can also be done about parity of esteem in respect of how we recognise traditional attainment, examination results and achievement.

The Convener: I think that we have dwelled a little too long on certain things. What I was trying to get at was whether the Executive was drawing together particular strands. It would be helpful if you could write to the committee about that.

Peter Peacock: Yes, I will do that.

The Convener: My second point is that, when you were talking about community schools, I was struck that there was no mention of external voluntary organisations. The Boys Brigade, the scouts and the guides, as well as smaller organisations, are all voluntary bodies, but, as I have said many times, they undertake much of the agenda relating to leadership development and motivation activities out of school. Sometimes, those bodies seem to be working in a parallel universe to schools. Have you considered supporting and encouraging those mainstream organisations, as well as others, that lurk around school communities but are not regarded as full parts of those communities? We must bear in mind that crossover lessons can be learned.

Peter Peacock: Absolutely. During the past few days, we have discussed the role of the voluntary sector in respect of wrap-around services in schools and helping to connect the school to wider community services and to activities such as sport, music, arts, drama and enterprise. It is becoming increasingly clear that some voluntary sector organisations offer services that provide schools with unique opportunities to re-engage kids who are at the margins. Some super work is going on with kids, some of whom are very damaged and completely outwith the system. Because of the impact of voluntary organisations, those kids are either getting back into learning or are learning in a new context and making progress in their lives. The voluntary sector is uniquely skilled in such matters. Some interesting new private organisations that offer projects for excluded kids are also emerging through the system.

On the wider leadership development front, several schools support the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. They also recognise opportunities that are provided by scouts, guides and other organisations at which the leadership potential of young people can be developed. There is a clear role for the voluntary sector. Ruth Campbell has been trying to connect voluntary organisations to schools, helping them to realise that potential and to make it available to schools.

The Convener: That was essentially the point that I was making, as I had thought that that did not happen. I had thought that there was a parallel universe problem.

We seem to have no further questions. We have probably exhausted ourselves from this morning's activities. I thank the minister for attending this morning at what has been a useful session.

Before we finish, we have two further brief items on the agenda. Agenda item 2 is to consider the issues that have been raised in today's evidence on our pupil motivation inquiry. At our meeting on 22 June, we will have the opportunity to discuss an issues paper from the clerks. If people want to raise anything for that paper, they have an opportunity to do that either now or by e-mail subsequently. Does anyone want to say anything about that at this point?

I think that many of the issues are obvious from the questions that we have asked. We will leave that issue for now.

Item in Private

13:20

The Convener: Finally, item 4 is to consider whether to discuss in private the appointment of a finance and budget adviser at our next meeting, which will be our special meeting on Tuesday 14 June at 3.30 pm. I suggest that we should meet in private on that occasion for that purpose. Is that agreed?

Members *indicated agreement*.

The Convener: With that, I close this meeting of the Education Committee. We are not too badly over time.

Meeting closed at 13:21.

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