

# **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Wednesday 22 June 2005

Session 2

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## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

† 13<sup>th</sup> 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

### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Mark Roberts

### ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

### LOCATION

Committee Room 5

† 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2005, Session 2—held in private.



# Scottish Parliament

## Education Committee

*Wednesday 22 June 2005*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

### Pupil Motivation Inquiry

**The Convener (Robert Brown):** We will kick off this meeting of the Education Committee. Now that we are in public session, people should make sure that their mobile phones are turned off. I have turned mine off to set an example by leadership.

In item 1, we will consider key issues that have been raised during our pupil motivation inquiry. There are three or four aspects to the item. First, we note the reports on the visits to schools in North Lanarkshire on 27 April and in Glasgow on 11 May. Those reports are simply to be noted, but if members have any comments on them or feel that things have been missed out, they should shout out. The third report is on the round-table session with teachers that took place on 17 May. If members have no observations to make on any of those reports, are we happy simply to note them?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** The more major aspect of the item is to discuss and agree the key issues that are to be included in the draft report on the inquiry, which is to be drawn up by the clerks over the recess and will be the subject of discussion at a meeting soon after the recess. The intention is that we will have a discussion on the draft report with a selection of teachers and other interested people, as we discussed and agreed before. A draft issues paper has been prepared. We are interested in any additional issues that members may want to raise and in any draft recommendations and things that members might be interested in.

**Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP):** One of the key issues that has been omitted from the report, but which should be included, is class sizes. There are references to class sizes throughout the reports and some of the witnesses raised the issue of class sizes. The note on the round-table discussion clearly mentions class sizes and I would like to add that to the key issues.

**The Convener:** It is fair to say that the approach taken to class sizes was rather more nuanced, as it talked about the support mechanisms and the different sorts of specialist provision and not just about class sizes per se. We did not receive any evidence on the precise effects of class sizes. It is generally accepted that class sizes are relevant,

so I am a bit concerned about how far we should pursue that issue in the context of this report.

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** It would be wrong to ignore it, as it came through in evidence. It could be included at one of the bullet points—it would be quite helpful if we numbered the bullet points, by the way.

**The Convener:** I think that what is in the paper is just a summary. I do not think that we should be too bothered about that at this stage.

**Fiona Hyslop:** The bullet point that is second from the bottom of the page suggests as an issue

“The relative importance of teacher/pupil relationships relative to the actual subject or activity”.

That could be expanded. The individual relationship is important, but class sizes, too, are relevant, for example to the participative stuff. Collaborative learning works better in a much smaller environment. Class sizes are definitely an issue, but the convener is right to say that the evidence on it came across in different ways. It is to do with the teacher-pupil relationship. We got evidence not so much on the stark reality of smaller class sizes leading to better learning and teaching but on class sizes in connection with the relationship issue. That is probably where we can include the issue of class sizes.

**The Convener:** That is absolutely right. That is what I was trying to get at. I think that Elaine Murray wants to add something.

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** It is on a different point.

**The Convener:** Sorry. Let us finish this point, first.

**Ms Byrne:** One of the starkest things for me at the round-table discussion was the talk about running commentary and engagement with young people and the impact that class sizes have on that. We have highlighted the different learning and teaching styles for young people as a key issue. Class sizes will be significant in relation to those different learning and teaching styles, and I think that that came out in the discussion. We also heard about personal learning planning—which is a key issue—and the engagement with young people on that. Altogether, it is about engagement, but it is about learning and teaching as well. I see that going right through this paper, in a number of references.

**The Convener:** Members may have different views, but my view is that we must address issues such as class sizes in the context of this report. Far more significant themes emerged, such as educational leadership in schools and the motivation of teachers. Although the committee would be perfectly happy to have an indication of

the importance of class sizes in the report, that must be kept in context and against the background of the way in which it was presented by different people.

**Dr Murray:** We also took quite a lot of evidence about the importance of external factors, the involvement of parents and the need for effective working with other agencies, whether using home-link workers or educational psychologists and other professionals. That was also an issue.

**The Convener:** A number of witnesses talked of the positive effects of school on a chaotic home background. Although school does not solve all the problems, that was one of the major positive issues that arose and became quite an encouraging theme. That should perhaps be taken strongly on board.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con):** I have a large number of minor points of emphasis. It might be more appropriate for me to send them to the clerks in the form of a letter, which can be circulated, rather than detain the committee with minor points. I also have five recommendations to make.

**The Convener:** We are not really dealing with the emphasis yet, but I am sure that it would be helpful if you did that. Thanks.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I will run quickly through my five recommendations.

The first relates to teacher training. There is a case for making teacher training courses incorporate training to ensure that new teachers learn about different teaching and learning styles and how to implement them. New teachers could also be provided with more training on how to deal effectively with parents and on how to help them to support their children's learning. I do not think that that is controversial.

My second recommendation is that parental involvement and support be recognised as key factors in maintaining pupils' self-esteem and motivation. Especially when pupils could be at risk of becoming disengaged, links with parents should be encouraged.

**The Convener:** We heard a lot of evidence about home-school links and so on, which we could use to develop that point.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** My third recommendation is that vocational courses should be properly accredited and that those who choose to take advantage of a broader curriculum should be able to access either skills for work or Scottish vocational qualifications that are incorporated into the Scottish credit and qualifications framework.

My fourth recommendation is that schools should be encouraged to develop links with small

and medium-sized enterprises and local businesses.

**The Convener:** Is that not happening already, through work placements and so on?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I think that it may be.

**Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I do not think that that is happening. I recall our visit to Glasgow. Pupils are more involved with the major training schemes that are run by the council and there is not so much of a link with local businesses. That is a relevant point.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** It might help if we focused a little bit on that.

**The Convener:** There was a linked issue about the relative success of the links that different schools have with business, which came out in some of our visits. Some schools are very enthusiastic about those links and have a committed person establishing them. That works well and the whole ethos is affected by it. In other schools, however, that is the 57<sup>th</sup> task of a senior teacher and it is not done as well as it might be. A number of themes come out of that.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I just ask that that be considered.

My fifth recommendation is more specific. It is that we should investigate the possibility of extending the Prince's Trust xl schemes to include more pupils.

**Dr Murray:** There is a wider point about the way in which such schemes are funded. When we were in Perth, we heard about the scheme that the YMCA is involved in.

**Fiona Hyslop:** That is right. The funding streams come from different Executive sources.

**Dr Murray:** There should be continuity of funding over a period of time, as well.

**The Convener:** That links in with the information that we got in Glasgow about the reduction in the contribution from European structural funds post-2006, which is a worry that I have raised with the minister.

**Fiona Hyslop:** We have to be careful in our approach, because we took a snapshot; we did not go to every school in every part of Scotland. Although I agree with the points that Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has highlighted, we cannot be absolute. In some parts of the country things are already happening and are working well and it is a case of considering how we promote them. I do not want us to suggest that in initial teacher training there is no teaching of different learning styles, because I do not believe that that is the case. It would be foolish for us to suggest that we

need to do something that is already happening. With all the points that have been raised it will be a question of degree and emphasis in ensuring that the best practice that we have seen is maximised throughout the country.

**The Convener:** That is a useful point. The other thing that we have to bear in mind is that we are considering a draft report. I want to keep open the possibility of exploring some angles further if we think that we have not dwelled on them fully. We might not do that, but the possibility is there. We heard about the teacher training issue by way of a by-blow from other issues. Although it is relevant, I am not sure to what extent we should make firm recommendations on it.

**Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** To echo what Fiona Hyslop said, I think that it will be difficult for us to be prescriptive in our recommendations, because it has not been that sort of inquiry. We have picked up on examples of good teaching and motivated teachers and pupils and have identified broad areas where work needs to be done. However, I have been left with an awful lot more questions at the end of the inquiry.

We have not done much in the way of quantitative analysis or detailed research. I am left wondering how important parental involvement is, although I realise that it is difficult to come up with finite measurements. I get the impression that no matter how motivated the pupil is, how inspiring the school leadership is and how small the class sizes are, the chaotic background that some pupils have to put up with hinders them and proves too big an obstacle for all the other factors to overcome. I do not have a feel for how important parental involvement is. As a rough example, how much emphasis should we put on asking the Executive to expand home links as opposed to reducing class sizes? We always do the things that we can do. It would clearly be advantageous to everybody in schools to have smaller class sizes, but without quantitative research it is difficult to be more prescriptive.

**The Convener:** Learning and Teaching Scotland suggested in its written evidence that the committee might think it worth while to commission a review of the effectiveness of education, motivation and disaffection research. That might or might not be the right thing to research, but there are a number of angles that we might want to cover. Perhaps we should say, "These good things appear to be happening. These are areas where there are difficulties of one sort or another. These are areas where work is not spread throughout the country." We might want to take on board some of the angles either as another part of this inquiry or as a different inquiry at a later date.

**Mr Macintosh:** I agree entirely. I thought that the recommendation from Learning and Teaching

Scotland was excellent, because it gets to the heart of what the committee is about. We are clearly not here to micromanage Scotland's education system or become experts. Some colleagues are teachers, but most of us are not, so we are not experts in pedagogical styles.

We did not explore some areas quite as much as I would have liked. There is a clear difference between primary and secondary education. The child-centred approach is so much more obvious in primary school. It is clearly missing in some secondaries, although there are inspirational schools. Secondary schools seem to be more target centred. They are based more on attainment than on achievement. There is no doubt that the way in which they are structured suits some people, but they take a very target-centred approach, rather than a child-centred approach. We did not explore that issue. There were several references to the slump in achievement at first and second-year level, which directly reflects a slump in motivation.

10:15

**The Convener:** Differences in achievement between boys and girls were also mentioned.

**Mr Macintosh:** I do not think that it is right just to say that girls mature earlier. What does that say? It does not say anything about why, if girls mature earlier, we do not motivate mature girls.

**The Convener:** It is also a turnaround from the previous position.

**Mr Macintosh:** Absolutely. We have flagged up an issue, but we have not made much progress on it. In our recommendations, we can highlight issues such as the importance of good leadership in schools. I do not wish to exaggerate, but I think that the minister's evidence was some of the best evidence that we received on the range of measures that are being taken to develop leadership. However, I am still slightly concerned that the structure in schools does not incentivise—to use a horrible word—what we want to promote. It does not reward motivated teachers but rewards attainment. It is fixated on targets, rather than on inspiring and motivating pupils.

We started with the assumption that we want to motivate all pupils. We do, but in the back of all our minds is the fact that pupils have to learn some things regardless of whether they are motivated. Some things are difficult and pupils will not necessarily like them—they just have to learn them. That is part of what happens at school. We have not explored that issue. We are working on the basis that everything at school can be inspirational and motivational. Some things at school are not, but pupils must still apply themselves to learning them.

**The Convener:** We did not go much into the issues of music, drama and sport. However, the interesting point was made that a really good teacher can make French or maths inspiring. The content of a subject is a different issue from the techniques that are used to bring about what one is seeking.

**Ms Byrne:** I agree with Ken Macintosh about the role of parents and home-school links. It would be interesting to know how many local authorities have employed home-link teachers in schools and have provided long-term rather than short-term funding for them.

One issue that we have not considered in much detail is mentoring. There is good practice that involves sixth-year pupils working with first-year pupils, but I am talking about mentoring by adults of the kind of young people to whom Ken Macintosh referred—those whose homes are chaotic and so on. It would be worth considering what good practice there is in mentoring.

Another issue that many teachers raised was problems with inclusion. Most of them cited social, emotional and behavioural difficulties as a problem for them when dealing with classes. We should examine in more depth the implications of that problem and the options that exist. Its impact is not limited to children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Teachers were very concerned that in some instances inclusion of young people is causing their peers to be influenced by them and is causing disruption. We need to consider how we can deal with that by improving motivation. Some of the steps that we are looking at will help. Mentoring and early intervention are important.

We have heard from schools about the school-college partnership, but I would like us to get feedback from colleges on how they believe that it is working.

**The Convener:** On inclusion, one aspect that emerged was that there are several categories of kids. There are the ones who sit at the back of the class and keep their heads down but learn nothing and do not benefit, and there are others who are more disruptive and noisy. Different issues are involved.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I thought Ken Macintosh's points were well made. On mentoring, I spoke to West Lothian Council, which is doing a pilot—the first of its kind in Scotland—to provide a link with businesses. I asked the council to send information to the clerks, which might be helpful as a background.

When we started the inquiry there was an underlying assumption that we were considering motivation among disaffected young people. However, at some of the sessions, we were struck

by the fact that we should be considering motivation not only in cases of extreme disaffection but across the spectrum. It is important that we try to get that balance. I agree with Ken Macintosh that we have not explored the issue of parents. Where we have, it has been at the home-link level, which probably involves the most severe cases of disaffection. We should ensure that we have that balance, and that we consider the motivation of the quiet ones who sit back as well as the disruptive ones. I do not necessarily want to give any more homework to the clerks, but we have not really considered examples of best practice from Scotland and other countries. However, before the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body has a fit because it thinks that we want to go traipsing round the world again, I think that there is an absence of desk research.

**The Convener:** Could we ask the Scottish Parliament information centre what can be done for us on that issue?

**Fiona Hyslop:** We do not want “War and Peace”, but it would be helpful to have some information on that issue, particularly now that we know which areas interest us.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** One background factor that has come out of the evidence, which I think the minister mentioned, was that teachers can give tremendous encouragement and inspiration to pupils if those teachers are not overloaded with work. Any attempt to prevent them from being overloaded with work and bureaucracy or to simplify their workload would be helpful.

**Fiona Hyslop:** When I visited Perth Grammar School and schools in Lanarkshire, I was struck by issues to do with motor skills, which are touched on in the paper. It is about aspects of physical activity—everyone has seen the Shelter report about buggy babies. When we visited the Lanarkshire schools, we saw the brain gym and the nurture groups.

**The Convener:** It was also suggested that for some reason there is rather more of an issue in that regard than there was in the past, particularly with boys. It is not entirely within our remit, but why is that?

**Fiona Hyslop:** When we were in Perth, we were made aware of older boys who had never developed those skills. There might be some desk research to be done on that. It is a part of the debate that is starting to emerge, but it is an area in which we might be able to make a useful contribution.

**Mr Ingram:** We have quite rightly focused on external factors affecting children's motivation at school, such as home background. However,



internal issues also need to be considered; for example, career goals give a focus for learning and affect how relevant the curriculum is—or appears to be—to pupils.

**The Convener:** In the context of their daily lives.

**Mr Ingram:** Yes. And in the context of the kind of work that pupils are likely to seek when they leave school. It struck me that careers advice needs to be embedded right through secondary school, rather than focusing on the last year or two at school. Children should be given the opportunity to talk about what they would like to do and about their future beyond school. That is an important motivational factor.

**The Convener:** A general point that came out quite strongly latterly—or perhaps I was just focusing on it—is that strong leadership and a motivational school can lead to a considerable difference between schools in similar catchment areas. There also seems to be a considerable difference in school discipline and the general state of law and order in the area surrounding the school, which I also thought was interesting. That might be anecdotal, as opposed to established fact but, if it is broadly the position that youth crime and similar wider issues can be dealt with in that way, it has considerable implications.

**Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab):** I will probably echo most of what has already been said. From a combination of our visits and our awareness as elected members, I am struck by schools where a series of folk are committed to the leaderships. We should always try to talk about the leadership in the plural rather than the singular because, although schools have been led by individual head teachers in some cases, in many, there is a team approach from the senior management at secondary level or from core staff members in primary schools.

I am also struck by the impact of schools that have very good home-school links, regardless of whether it is at the most difficult and challenging end of intervening on behaviour. The best schools deal with those matters much earlier, rather than addressing them when they are at their extremity.

Thirdly, I am struck by schools that not only do lots of sport, art and extra-curricular stuff but generally have a connection with as wide a catchment as possible. That is sometimes difficult, given that there is no obvious school for some communities, particularly in urban areas, where there is a bit more movement. However, those schools that have tried that approach have made a big difference.

The jury is still out on some aspects, but in many of the initiatives that go beyond co-operative learning, students are being made central to the shaping of how they learn. We saw good

examples of that when we were in North Lanarkshire. I certainly thought that it was worth while.

I know that there is a division of views on whether a slightly greater emphasis on vocational education works. In my constituency, youngsters whose pathways from first and second year into third and fourth year would have been difficult have made a significant contribution to the schools because of the commitment to vocational education as part of their curriculum. I know that there are different views among educationists about the moral and educational benefits of vocational education and how we define those, but it strikes me that we should at least assess that in some way. Even if we do not have a conclusive view on it, we could at least say that, in places in which we have seen that approach, it has been worth while, but that it perhaps requires further development, debate and discussion.

**The Convener:** I have a couple of points on that. The underlying issue of parity of esteem was mentioned in connection with exams. I was quite impressed by the school—I cannot remember which one it was—that offered a variety of choices and where vocational education courses were not necessarily for those who had the most difficulty but were equally valid choices to more traditional academic streams. The normalisation of parity of esteem between different options is important. Vocational education can be regarded as empowering young people who, whatever the theory of the matter, would otherwise drop off the bottom. Therefore, it should be considered as something that helps people to fulfil their potential rather than something that categorises them.

A number of specific issues came out in some of the written evidence. We have not got into considering looked-after children, but we all know that there are many issues to do with looked-after children and we might want to come back to that matter in a more general way later. Some evidence was submitted on the particular problems of deaf children, children from other linguistic backgrounds, and children with mental health issues and on how those problems are related. Those are particular barriers, difficulties or opportunities—it depends on how we view them—to be considered, but they are of importance for many children.

In the evidence, there was a tension between mainstream schooling and taking young people out of school to send them to a unit or to an organisation—such as Fairbridge or the one in Paisley—that deals with young people who have extreme difficulty in school and are turned off it. Clearly there are difficulties in getting people back into mainstream education; those difficulties cannot be overstated. It would be ideal if problems

and issues could be dealt with within the school, but that is not possible with some young people, so different methods outwith the school have to be tried. The better performing schools were able to deal successfully with more young people within the school, which is quite an important theme.

10:30

**Ms Byrne:** I am not sure that we have evidence for that. Some young people clearly benefited from being removed from school and being engaged with in smaller settings. What came across to me as being important was the time that is taken to engage with such people. I do not know whether we have any real evidence that the successful schools had more such time than the less successful schools, or whether we need to consider catchment areas, levels of deprivation, employment and unemployment figures, sizes of schools and classes. There are so many imponderable issues around the subject. It is difficult for the committee to work out why some schools can maintain and motivate the more difficult young people while others cannot. To find that out would take full-scale research into the size of schools and classes, the areas that they are in and so on. We do not have that evidence.

**The Convener:** Much of the evidence that we took was anecdotal, so we are probably not in a position to provide conclusions or views on that.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** There are certain circumstances in which children with emotional and behavioural difficulties need special support. It is oversimplistic to accept the premise that all teachers should be able to deal with that however big the class. We need to take a pragmatic approach.

**Dr Murray:** We took evidence from Dunbar, for example, that some schools are dealing with such pupils in a small setting within the school rather than outwith it. We could take a variety of different approaches. I am not sure that we will find definitive answers on those issues, however; it is more about making recommendations.

**Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab):** Some of the issues that we are wrestling with are complex and are in some ways at the frontier of work in education, so we will not necessarily reach conclusions and the people who read our reports will not necessarily agree with all the conclusions that we do reach. I would like anyone who reads our report to know the following facts, which can perhaps be found through desk research.

We have said that behaviour is a spectrum that ranges from the person not attending school, to episodic attendance that seriously undermines the quality of the educational experience, to the pupils that Alan McLean talked about as being present in

body only but not being engaged by the experience, and on to the motivated kids. For the pupils who have given up on school, the episodic attenders and those who are not engaged, we know that the problems manifest themselves at some time during first and second year in secondary school and that those kids are lost by the time they get to third year. There is a significant cohort in the third year who just do not attend, who are episodic attenders, or who do not participate meaningfully.

The most important thing we could do is try to put a Scotland-wide number on each of those three categories. How many third-year pupils in Scotland are persistent non-attenders? It might be 1 per cent or 2 per cent, but we need a sense of how many kids are so disaffected that they do not come to school, how many are so episodic in their attendance that it is difficult to work with them, and how many are present but disengaged. Those figures might be estimates, but we cannot write a report on pupil disaffection that does not try to find out the size of that cohort, especially when all three elements are put together. I am clueless as to the answer, but I want to know that information at the end of the process.

What has also become apparent is that the sharing of good practice in this area is not very good. Ideally, the report should highlight not only the rough percentages for, but the level of, variation in those categories in third year throughout Scotland. That will be a summer job for the clerks or SPICe.

Although there is an enormous amount of statistics on attendance, the data are not usually used to mine those three questions and to find out how many pupils fall into those categories. If we really believe that some areas are much better than others—indeed, we have seen evidence that suggests as much—we should perhaps try to find an example of the variation between two broadly similar authorities. For example, the percentage could be 5 per cent in a school or community that has got it together, whereas elsewhere the combination of the three cohorts might amount to 15 per cent. That would give us a sense of the variation throughout the country. Even if people who read our report do not agree with all of our recommendations, we will at least have flagged up the scale of the problem and we will have provided a menu from which they can select a way forward. It might well be impossible to use the data in that way, but given what we have heard, it might be possible and it would certainly provide some valuable context.

**The Convener:** You are absolutely right; we should have a handle on that matter. The mention of good practice also raises a question about whether there is established agreed practice or

whether we are at an experimental stage at which different authorities are trying out different things. I recollect that someone said that what works in one area does not necessarily work in another. I do not think that I believe that; after all, one would have thought that common lessons would emerge, although whether those common lessons would point us in one direction is another matter. We must take account of the mix of different aspects.

**Mr Macintosh:** As we heard in an earlier evidence session and as Wendy Alexander has just pointed out, there is a need for comparative data for areas in Scotland. I also believe that we need data on whether schools or providers that are slightly outside the mainstream have been successful in addressing the problem, and on when they are utilised.

I am still not clear whether the decision to educate the most disaffected pupils outside mainstream schools is taken for those pupils' benefit or for the benefit of the other children in the class. After all, it is not a black-and-white matter. I see parallels with how we approached special educational needs a few years ago. Five or 10 years ago, it became quite clear that most children with such needs were not accessing the same level of education as other children and that educational institutions or structures were denying them the same number of school hours and the same educational content. We tried to address that in a number of ways.

As I said, I believe that we are touching on similar areas here. For example, quite early on in our inquiry on special educational needs, we examined the huge variation between pupils who had records of needs and pupils who did not, and how the different approaches that were being taken were perhaps at variance with the range of needs. Similarly, authorities in some areas are making every attempt to include children in mainstream schooling and to put all the resources into mainstream facilities, while other authorities are using extracurricular or alternative means of provision, some of which is more educational.

I realise that we are getting into a bit of detail here and that it is probably too early to draw any conclusions or to make recommendations, but the role of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, which has been flagged up a couple of times, is important in this respect. HMIE is still the main driver of good practice in education in our schools. I have no doubt that schools listen when it puts a value on something, puts work into it, makes comparisons and sets standards.

I certainly do not want to load any more homework on the clerks but—even if this committee does not do the work but simply concludes that the work should be done—a comparative system, driven by Her Majesty's

Inspectorate of Education, should be set up and should produce recommendations.

**The Convener:** If I recall correctly, HMIE has produced a number of reports on some such matters.

**Mr Macintosh:** It gave us a list of them, did it not?

**The Convener:** Yes, that is right. We received some evidence about that. That is relevant. There is importance in having champions of school-college links—teachers or not—who would have a particular mandate to push such matters. That would be more effective than leaving things to chance.

Members will remember the lady whom we met in Perth who had a sort of multidisciplinary approach. She had some counselling experience; I think her job was to consider options and so on. She was a unique person in some respects, I suppose. Presumably, however, there is scope in the education system for people with multidisciplinary skills to become involved. We have not dealt with that aspect to any great extent but, with team teaching and so on, changes are taking place in the workforce, to some extent behind the scenes.

**Dr Murray:** Like Ken Macintosh, I think that the report could recommend that more data be collected. Research is important. Following up on what Wendy Alexander was saying, I am not sure that statistics on the various categories of disaffection are available. Certainly, unauthorised absence is recorded for each school, but that could relate to many matters, such as parents taking their children on holiday, so those figures will not necessarily provide insight into disaffection. We might want to recommend that the Executive undertake the relevant research.

**The Convener:** I suppose that the overriding theme is the importance of this stuff. That is the general, high-level point. Motivation makes a big difference to the quality of life and the potential opportunities for young people. Motivation of children and young people relies very much on the motivation of teachers and the organisation, leadership and so on across the school.

**Fiona Hyslop:** One of the broad issues is that of control, or the lack of it. Successful schools are those in which pupils feel involved in their education and teachers feel that they have control. That comes back to some of the work that we did with Alan McLean at the start of our inquiry, about autonomy, empowerment and control issues. Successful techniques tend to be liberating in that sense. I would like that to be one of our overall themes.

**The Convener:** That links in to what someone said earlier about ownership of projects by

children in terms of democracy, school councils and various other more sophisticated methods.

**Fiona Hyslop:** That is where mentoring came in, along with a load of other things. Certainly in Perth, we saw that pupils were taking control not only of their education but of the school and its management.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** With social and behavioural problems, there might be a problem with a lack of highly qualified professional staff. For example, I went to a school in Livingston that had a team of professional advisers because it had one child whose father was in prison and whose mother was an alcoholic and a drug addict. That child had particular problems which meant that dealing with the child on the same basis as all of the other children did not work. I fear that there might be a shortage of professional advisers who have expertise in specific difficulties.

**The Convener:** We know from evidence that there is a shortage.

**Ms Byrne:** Availability of such advisers is key. The issue comes down to additional support for learning and implementation of provisions, because advisers have a big part to play in relation to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The shortage of clinical psychologists, educational psychologists and specialists in child and family mental health teams is a problem that we can only mention—we are not in a position to solve it. We have to bear it in mind, however. It is important.

**The Convener:** That is right. I made the point that although the school cannot solve all the problems that have wider causes, it can provide a point of stability and an environment in which some attempt can be made to tackle problems.

It appears that we are finished with that subject, unless there is anything else that Martin Verity requires.

10:45

**Martin Verity (Clerk):** That is enough to be getting on with.

Some of the information to which Wendy Alexander referred might be available from the Executive. Following the Executive's appearance before the committee, we asked for information about school attendance rates; we will wait to find out whether we get a response. We can always ask SPICe to investigate what research there is, what can be obtained easily and what more work needs to be done.

**Ms Alexander:** We could perhaps also make a formal request to HMIE by sending a fairly open-ended letter in which we might ask whether HMIE

is aware of the number of pupils in each of the cohorts and how much variation there is across the country. As others have said, that might provide the justification for saying that further research is necessary. It would be interesting to see what response such a letter from the convener would generate.

**The Convener:** It is fair to observe that, from the beginning, one of the difficulties with the inquiry has been to contain it within bounds. In a sense, it is easy to be enthusiastic about trying to solve the problems of the world with the inquiry. The process will be that Mark Roberts will be confined—with an icepack on his head—to prepare the draft report over the recess, and we will have another crack at matters after the recess.

There is the subsidiary issue of whether to discuss the draft report in public or in private. We have got into the habit of discussing draft reports in public and, to my mind, there is no obvious reason not to do so with the draft report on pupil motivation. If members agree, let us stick with that.

**Members indicated agreement.**

## Work Programme

10:47

**The Convener:** Item 2 is consideration of our forward work programme. Members have a paper that summarises some of the issues. I suppose that many suggestions for inquiries could emerge from the discussion that we have just had. We must fit in consideration of the proposed bill on parental involvement in Scottish schools at some point, but there are a number of other themes that we could tackle. It has been pointed out that our remit covers social work as well as educational matters. Do members have thoughts on other work that we could do during the next year or so? There are obviously time limitations, given that we have commitments up until Christmas.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I will throw a thought into the melting pot. Teachers would welcome our having a brief look at the McCrone settlement and how it is working in practice. I spoke at a trade union conference not long ago and got the feeling that there is a groundswell of opinion that favours that.

**The Convener:** We have had that on our agenda for a while. The issue is the point at which it would be appropriate to do that work.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I recall from our discussions that the minister recommended that we consider the issue this spring.

**The Convener:** There are a number of on-going strands.

**Ms Byrne:** It might be useful for us to consider the review of the children's hearings system. We could start off by getting a report on that.

**The Convener:** There is likely to be legislation on that at some future point. I am not sure that it is our job to duplicate consultation that the Executive will hold.

**Mr Macintosh:** I assumed that some of the work on the relevant bill would come our way. We will not be the lead committee, but we will probably be asked to play a part.

**The Convener:** Perhaps we should feed into the process the fact that we feel that we ought to have some form of involvement in consideration of the proposed parental involvement bill.

**Martin Verity:** We could always ask for a briefing. The committee might be the lead committee.

**Mr Macintosh:** I cannot imagine that we will be.

**Mr McAveety:** I have an observation on the adoption review. I know that the legal terminology has dominated the news, but the review process is

just as much about the kind of support that is provided to children. The review is to address the needs of children who face being placed in an adoptive family. That can become a legal debate, which is a nightmare for everybody.

**The Convener:** I also wondered about the linked issue of fostering, which is important, and institutional child care, which falls substantially within our remit.

**Martin Verity:** Protection of children falls within the committee's remit. If an issue to do with children and young people falls within the remit of the Minister for Education and Young people, it falls within the remit of the committee.

**The Convener:** We know the extent of failings in relation to the opportunities that people who come out of institutional care are given, for example in education and other areas. It is the single biggest failure of the system.

**Fiona Hyslop:** We have learned a lot and had good sessions when we have taken evidence from individual agencies that are related to our portfolio. We should not lose sight of that. We can have stand-alone sessions within other sessions. I recall that we have not taken evidence from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. It would be helpful to go through who we have not seen. We could tie that in with their annual reports, which would help to give a perspective.

**The Convener:** We agreed to bring such reports to the committee. Have we received most of them?

**Martin Verity:** We have received those that have been published, but there will probably be another round of publications. The committee agreed to note such reports when they come out and to decide whether to take evidence on them.

**Fiona Hyslop:** It is more about having a dialogue with the people, rather than studying the annual reports.

**The Convener:** As there was with the SQA in the past, there may be a problem with organisations themselves, and we may want to get their take on matters.

**Fiona Hyslop:** That is right.

**The Convener:** It might be helpful to get an indication at our away day of when the reports come out, because I have slightly lost track.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I suggest that it is a rolling programme.

The other issue, which I raised with the convener previously, is the situation of children at Dungavel and their education. We have seen the report from Her Majesty's inspectorate of prisons for England and Wales. We are duty-bound to

examine that stand-alone issue, which might mean engaging with South Lanarkshire Council on some of the recommendations and concerns in the report. It might not be a big full-blown inquiry, but it would be remiss of us not to do that. An individual session within our programme would be appropriate.

**The Convener:** That matter is very much on the fringes of our responsibilities, and indeed those of the Scottish Executive, which we are trying to hold accountable. I have a lot of sympathy with the suggestion, but I am not convinced that it is a mainstream matter for the committee to take forward.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I am not saying that we should have a full-blown inquiry. We are also driven by what Parliament said. We should recall the motion that was passed on educational support for children, which is devolved. An aspect of the recent report was about educational provision for children. We could examine that report. I think that South Lanarkshire Council would like to have the opportunity to talk about what it wants to do and what it takes from the report. That would be appropriate.

**The Convener:** Are there any views on that?

**Ms Byrne:** That suggestion is appropriate. We have a locus because children are being educated at Dungavel. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 backs that up.

**The Convener:** I will take advice from the clerk on the matter in a minute. Are there any other views?

**Dr Murray:** I am not sure about the suggestion, because we cannot influence the outcome. It is not necessarily the best use of our time to hold inquiries—however concerned we are about the issues—when we cannot influence the outcome.

On slightly wider issues, the adoption and fostering review will result in legislation next year and, from what the minister told me yesterday, a children's hearings bill is likely to be introduced in about a year. Issues relating to those matters will probably be discussed in the context of the legislation and in the consultation at stage 1. I expect those bills to come to the Education Committee.

**The Convener:** Children's hearings are on the fringe of the procedural aspects—

**Dr Murray:** Yes—there is also the justice aspect.

Support for looked-after children is important. Given the lack of achievement of such children, perhaps work on such support would be worth while.

**The Convener:** That is significant. I have an uneasy conscience about such matters and

whether society could do better in respect of numbers and so on.

**Mr Macintosh:** I am not sure whether the issue that I want to raise is within our remit, although part of it is. I would like to consider what we are doing to address inequalities in education, particularly at the point at which people leave the school system and go into further and higher education. I do not know whether we should go as far as a full inquiry, but the issue involves the wider access agenda and is not only about inequalities—which we are clearly doing things to try to address—but about fairness, qualifications and the different kinds of institution that are involved. The issue is half covered by the Education Committee and half covered by the Enterprise and Culture Committee—perhaps the latter committee covers the whole issue.

**The Convener:** It probably does.

**Mr Macintosh:** That committee probably does cover the whole issue, which is a difficulty and the reason that I am not sure whether we can consider it. There are difficulties as a result of the division in our responsibilities and the division in society in general. I have absolutely no doubt that the universities used the exam system, and highers in particular, as their gatekeeper in the past. Therefore, much of what has happened in the upper part of secondary schools has been shaped not by pupils' needs, but by the needs or wishes of the higher and further education institutions, although that happens less than it used to. The schools have become grading mechanisms, as it were.

**The Convener:** Surely the broader issue is the appropriateness or otherwise of particular exams and qualifications.

**Mr Macintosh:** Exactly. In recent years, the nature of exams and grades has changed. I do not want to go into the old question of whether exams are becoming easier and so on, but it is a little bit about that. For example, this year there was quite a lot of fall-out—and this is at the top end of the spectrum—about young people getting into medical school. There were far more applicants for medical school in Scotland and thus far more disappointed applicants. We are talking about high-achieving young people being left with a sense of frustration at worst and of failure at best. That is not a particularly positive message to give to people who are leaving school and setting out on their adult life, and is avoidable. Society is building up expectations among certain people about what they need to do, what they can achieve and what is open to them and then slamming the door on them, which is a painful lesson for anybody.

**The Convener:** There is also the issue that half of all university students seem to end up in non-graduate jobs, if the information that I have heard is right.

11:00

**Mr Macintosh:** I do not know whether that is true or not. We recognise that a graduate education will open the door to better earnings and a more prosperous life on average—quite considerably so—although I do not know what kind of job that would entail. There is an issue for education, for schools and particularly for the exam system. As I said, I do not know whether I would like there to be an inquiry, but the issue niggles away at me. There are implications for equality. We are supposedly continually improving the system, but we are not always narrowing the achievement gap.

The final issue that concerns me is the placing requests system, although I am not entirely sure what the committee can do about it. Placing requests cause much frustration. Despite the changes that have been made to the system over the years, there sometimes remains a gap between parental expectations of what can be achieved through the system and what is achieved. The system puts families through the mill and demands an awful lot of time and effort from education authorities, which could be minimised in a better designed system. We need a system that allows an element of choice without inflating expectations. A system that tries to squeeze a quart into a pint pot ultimately lets people down and wastes energy and time.

**The Convener:** Given that there are limited opportunities for placement in certain schools that people want their children to attend, whatever the system, I am not persuaded that major improvements can be made.

**Mr McAveety:** The matter is as tortuous as the allocation of houses.

**The Convener:** I was thinking exactly the same thing.

**Mr McAveety:** The committee's work is driven as much by proposed legislation as it is by anything else, but our core concern is how we maximise opportunities in schools, whether we are talking about pre-five, primary or secondary education. Although I understand that there are concerns about Dungavel, I do not know whether that should be our priority, given that the committee has other, pressing priorities. That is not to minimise the concern that members have about children and families who are in Dungavel. We should certainly keep a monitoring brief on the matter, but I have doubts about whether we should make it the subject of an inquiry.

This is another big issue and I do not know whether we can fit work on it into our forward work programme, but a fair amount of money has been allocated to sport and culture through non-departmental public bodies. There are three major elements: investment in sports co-ordinators; investment in youth music, which is baselined in the Scottish Arts Council's budget; and the general approach around cultural co-ordinators. I have a hunch that some schools in Scotland are co-ordinating work wonderfully well and I have a funny feeling that class bias might be involved, although that might just be the effect of my natural prejudices. However, some people are articulate and adept at navigating the system but that might not be the case in schools in more disadvantaged parts of our constituencies. NDPBs and the Scottish Arts Council are liaising or engaging in partnership with local authorities to develop the youth music initiative, but throughout Scotland the approach is uneven and depends on whether councils have cultural strategies.

An additional, complex issue to do with sports co-ordinators arises out of the investment programme, through which schools are changing in size. We need to ensure that schools use existing facilities or develop new facilities. Again, we might do investigatory work on the matter before considering it in more detail, but it strikes me that a fair amount of public cash has been allocated to schoolkids throughout Scotland and we need to know what difference that investment is making.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I agree with Frank McAveety that there is no case for a wholesale inquiry into what is happening at Dungavel. However, HMIE ought to be allowed to visit the institution. Is it not somewhat anomalous that HMIE can investigate the education of children anywhere in Scotland, but cannot do so in Dungavel, because that institution is the responsibility of the Home Office? That point could be settled.

**The Convener:** HMIE inspected Dungavel at the request of HM chief inspector of prisons for England and Wales.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** HMIE has inspected Dungavel, then.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I do not suggest that we have a full inquiry. Frank McAveety said that we should monitor the situation, which accords with the committee's role and responsibilities and the terms of the motion to which the Parliament agreed. The most recent report of HM chief inspector of prisons for England and Wales made specific recommendations about South Lanarkshire Council, which we can consider.

**The Convener:** Before we go any further, I would like to get the clerk's take on whether it would be competent for the committee to undertake work on the matter

**Martin Verity:** If I may, I will write to members on that point. Whereas, in a sense, the Parliament can debate any matter, the committees are required to examine only matters that fall within their remits. The issue is the definition of the committee's remit. As the committees' remits are drawn to cover devolved, not reserved, issues, the debate is the extent to which the issue is reserved or devolved. Lord James may have touched on that when he raised the point about HMIE visits.

**Fiona Hyslop:** That is the route.

**Martin Verity:** If members do not mind, I will not give a response now; I would rather write to you on the issue.

**The Convener:** We are trying to carry out a preliminary trawl of issues so that we can discuss the matter further and arrive at conclusions during our proposed away day, if members are happy with that arrangement.

I have an issue to table, although I am not sure how far we would want to take it. A theme has emerged about bureaucracy—for example, in relation to personal learning plans—and the linked issue of devolution to schools, which Lord James and other members have touched on occasionally. Issues within that theme might be worth considering—they are not necessarily the top priority, but the theme has come through a lot.

**Dr Murray:** Our report on the recommendations in "It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright" came out about a year ago. At some point, we should ask the Executive for a further update on its progress on our recommendations.

**The Convener:** The thought of returning to the subject of disclosures fills me with huge enthusiasm.

**Dr Murray:** We could probably get the update by letter—we would not need an evidence session.

**Fiona Hyslop:** The issue is mentioned in the forward work programme. I presume that we will have updates six monthly.

**The Convener:** Yes, the issue is covered in the work programme.

**Ms Byrne:** On that issue, Kathleen Marshall, Scotland's commissioner for children and young people, has made interesting points about children who live in drug and alcohol-misusing families. As part of our work on the protection of children, could we get Kathleen Marshall along to discuss her views and ideas about protecting children and families and working with extended families?

**The Convener:** I have two points on that. First, I have taken the liberty of inviting Kathleen Marshall to give a lecture, as she did last year, on what I hope will be a controversial subject of her choice. I have the idea that that might be an annual event, if members think that that is okay. Whether that takes place is obviously a matter for Kathleen. I had a preliminary discussion with her about the issue at the opening of her office. I hope that we can do something in that connection.

Secondly, as members are aware, the children's commissioner produces an annual report. I cannot quite remember the timescale, but I think that the report on the first year of activity is due soon.

**Martin Verity:** I am not sure.

**The Convener:** We can ask her to give evidence on particular themes in the report.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Only two years remain of this session of Parliament, so we need to get a handle on the proposed legislation that is likely to come our way. We must ensure that we are not stopped from doing inquiries because we are bogged down in legislation. However, I suspect that, because of the adoption review, the children's hearings review and other issues that might arise, the final year of the session could involve a lot of legislative work. Therefore, we must be focused and ensure that we maximise our inquiries in the coming year. During our away day, we should try to get a feel for what we want to do. We have a great range of suggestions, but we have limited time.

**The Convener:** Absolutely. We are trying to get the menu at the moment, after which we will take the matter from there.

I have a couple of points about our approach. We have an obligation to have on-going engagement with the Scottish Youth Parliament, but we have not met with it in any formal sense recently. It is also desirable that we feed in through visits round the country. Fiona Hyslop, Lord James and I had a videoconference with Notre Dame High School yesterday. I find the medium slightly difficult because of the time gap in responses, but it provides scope to engage with schools that are at a distance when visits are not practical. We should think about whether that sort of technique has something to be said for it.

**Ms Alexander:** It would be helpful if we had relatively early clarification on whether the committee visits will be in week 1 or week 2 of the summer recess. I know that the visits are incredibly difficult to set up, but if the clerks could e-mail us when they have a sense of which week they will be, that would be helpful.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The devolved school management issue is, in a way, associated with the McCrone deal.



**The Convener:** Yes. There are associated issues about the faculty system.

**Fiona Hyslop:** We touched on that with the unions in discussing principal teachers, about which concerns were raised at the time of the McCrone deal. I have called on the minister to review the implementation of McCrone. Obviously, that is not a critique of whether McCrone is successful. We could carry out a review, although I think that the Auditor General for Scotland is doing some work in that regard.

**The Convener:** There are reviews of different sorts.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Perhaps we could get some information on what other reviews are taking place. The variety of methods of implementation by different local authorities is causing concern.

**The Convener:** We should not lose entirely the possibility of having a reporter on some issues, if that is a way of covering an issue quickly, or of having a single evidence session on an issue if we want to get a feel for it, rather than carrying out a full inquiry.

We have had an e-mail on the away day. The idea is not to have an away day with an overnight stay, as we have done occasionally, but to have a morning or afternoon session with lunch. It is in order to have an informal part, because that is useful. Are the format and the suggested date of 31 August suitable?

**Mr McAveety:** What day of the week is that?

**The Convener:** It is a Wednesday. Will we have a 100 per cent turnout?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Good stuff.

*Meeting closed at 11:12.*



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