The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 20 September 2011

Session 4

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EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
5th Meeting 2011, Session 4

CONVENER

*Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP)
*Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
*Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)
*Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)
*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
*Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)
Alan Armstrong (Education Scotland)
Ann Ballinger (Scottish Secondary Teachers Association)
George Jamieson (National Parent Forum of Scotland)
Bill Maxwell (Education Scotland)
Drew Morrice (Educational Institute of Scotland)
Ken Muir (Education Scotland)
Pam Nesbitt (Association of Headteachers and Deputes in Scotland)
Jane Peckham (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers)
Eileen Prior (Scottish Parent Teacher Council)
Alan Robertson (Voice)
John Stodter (Association of Directors of Education in Scotland)
Andrew Sutherland (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)
Jim Thewliss (School Leaders Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Terry Shevlin

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Education and Culture Committee

Tuesday 20 September 2011

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:01*]

Interests

The Convener (Stewart Maxwell): Good morning and welcome to the fifth meeting of the Education and Culture Committee in the fourth session. Members and those in the gallery should keep their mobile phones or any other electronic devices they happen to have on their person switched off. Even if they are set to silent mode, they still interfere with the sound system so, for everyone's benefit, it would be very much appreciated if they could be switched off.

We have received apologies from Joan McAlpine. I welcome in her place the committee substitute, George Adam, and ask him to declare any interests.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): I point members to my published declaration of interests. More relevant, perhaps, is the fact that I am still a councillor in Renfrewshire Council.

The Convener: Thank you very much.

Education Scotland

10:02

The Convener: The first item on the agenda is an evidence-taking session with representatives of Education Scotland, the major new educational body that was created very recently. I welcome to the meeting Bill Maxwell, the body's transitional chief executive; Ken Muir, chief inspector; and Alan Armstrong, director of curriculum and assessment. I invite Mr Maxwell to make some opening remarks before we move to questions.

Bill Maxwell (Education Scotland): Good morning and thank you very much for the invitation to give evidence on the role and remit of our new integrated improvement agency, Education Scotland, the name of which, I should add, has been improved since it was first announced. Convener, you have already introduced Ken Muir, who as one of our chief inspectors has responsibility for our new school inspections framework and will be able to answer questions on that in detail, and Alan Armstrong, who manages our curriculum for excellence support programme in relation to curriculum and assessment support and aspects of the glow intranet. I am sure that his input in those areas will be helpful.

Committee members will have seen the briefing papers that we provided, but I wish to make a small number of opening remarks. Having started on 1 July, we are still less than 100 days old but I am very excited by the new agency's potential—and indeed have been since it was announced last October. Given the maturity and historical evolution of our education system, I believe that by bringing together inspection and the broad range of support functions that now fall within our remit and putting them under the umbrella of a single coherent and strategic public body we are very much making the right move at the right time. It builds very logically on the direction of travel that we have been taking for many years with regard to inspection and support for the system.

In inspection, the trend was very much towards capitalising on the investment that we have been making for many years in building education providers' capacity for self-evaluation and driving their own improvement. Increasingly, that has led to inspection being a process that we do with, rather than to, schools and colleges, which means that inspection has become much more proportionate in its approach. It is no longer a one-size-fits-all process cycling around every provider on a fixed, cyclical basis. Instead, the process has become much more streamlined, so that providers who are evidently successful at improving themselves are visited less often, although we would still be interested in seeing some of them to

know how they do it. We target our effort more particularly on the providers who need more support.

Inspection has become much more strongly focused on evaluating provision against outcomes rather than seeking to standardise the teaching process through which outcomes are achieved. Inspection has also become increasingly responsive and flexible in considering a wider range of teaching and learning approaches through which good outcomes might be achieved.

On the curriculum side, we have seen a parallel direction of travel towards less prescription. That is evident in the sort of national guidance that we have provided, which has an increased focus on building the capacity of professionals at the front line to take responsibility for their own implementation and continuous improvement of the curriculum and teaching that they provide within the broader and more flexible framework of national guidance and support. As I am sure that the committee is well aware, curriculum for excellence exemplifies that principle.

As a result of the creation of the new agency, we have an opportunity to develop a really powerful virtuous cycle in which Education Scotland, through capitalising on synergies between our inspection and support work, can act as an engine for driving improvement through the system. It can do that by identifying, nurturing and evaluating the best practice that emerges in schools and colleges and feeding the lessons from that experience directly into improved advice and support resources, which are then made widely available to practitioners across Scotland, while also mixing in the best intelligence and research from beyond Scotland, internationally and elsewhere.

We can therefore accelerate good practice round the system. Certainly, my vision is of an education system that is based on a strong national consensus about the purposes of education and the commitment to ambitious levels of achievement for all, and which is world class in its ability to improve continuously and almost virally spread ideas about the most effective professional practice in ways that ensure that every learner gets the best-quality experience suited to their individual needs.

Hargreaves and Shirley, who are a couple of Canadian academics and influential writers on school improvement, have talked about the ideal approach to driving improvement across all education systems being one in which you build from the bottom and steer from the top, but provide support and pressure from the sides in fairly equal quantities. In very broad terms, that is exactly what we are trying to do.

The Convener: Thank you very much, Mr Maxwell. It is a pleasure for the committee to meet you this morning. We have a very tight agenda, so I will move straight to questions. Marco Biagi will kick off.

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): Thank you very much for coming along. It is good to hear from you. I am interested in how you manage a broad range of functions. It is fine to talk about visions, but when we consider functions we can see that there are jobs to be done on the ground, especially in the context of the reducing head count and the coming together of a diverse set of functions. How have you been able to manage that so far and how do you envisage it going?

Bill Maxwell: Our short-term focus has naturally been on the safe running of the continuing commitments for business that we had already planned. I think that we are achieving that pretty successfully. We have effectively taken the pre-existing business plans—four different bits came together to form Education Scotland, of which Learning and Teaching Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education were the largest—and are continuing to deliver those programmes on their planned basis.

Like all other public bodies, we are dealing with reducing resources for the next foreseeable period, but we were already planning for that within the inspectorate and LTS. There has therefore been no shock to the system; it has been more a matter of integrating the programmes. Indeed, I am sure that in due course we will develop additional efficiencies out of synergies between the two organisations, particularly around back-room functions and so on.

Safe running is our current priority, but we are looking at developing new and innovative ways of re-engineering some of our work to create more impact and to increase synergies between the two main parts of the business.

Marco Biagi: You have been given the new function of validating language schools by the United Kingdom Border Agency, which came as a bit of a surprise to some of the language schools that have contacted me. How have you been able to manage that? It is a completely new function.

Bill Maxwell: That is a new area of business: we will develop a programme to look at the quality of learning and teaching and educational provision in a number of language schools. I will hand over to Ken Muir, as he has been deep in the business of preparing for that. We have a lead-in time, as we will not begin to undertake inspections until next year.

Ken Muir (Education Scotland): The UKBA asked us to undertake inspections of the quality of

educational provision in private colleges and English language schools. We have prepared a framework for taking that forward, and we are finalising the fee scales for charging those establishments. The idea is that by the end of December 2012, all such establishments in Scotland will have been inspected by Education Scotland. The reports that we produce for the individual colleges and schools will be available for those establishments to use in whatever way they choose. We anticipate that they would use the reports as part of their submission to the UKBA in seeking continuing tier 4 status after December 2012.

The Convener: It is obvious that the establishments would use the reports for that purpose, but do you envisage that they would be used as some sort of marketing tool, especially if the colleges and schools receive particularly good inspection reports?

Ken Muir: Publicly funded and independent schools currently share with prospective students the outcomes of inspections, and I imagine that private colleges and English language schools might do likewise. The reports are used for a variety of purposes, of which that is certainly one.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): When Education Scotland was established, concerns were raised about combining HMIE's inspection function with the functions of Learning and Teaching Scotland, which was responsible for developing the curriculum. There was concern that the organisation would, to a certain extent, be inspecting itself. I appreciate that Education Scotland was established only in July, but how are you able to combine those roles? How is that developing?

Bill Maxwell: There are a number of challenges in designing any new organisation, but at the forefront of our minds is the need to maintain absolute public confidence in the impartiality and objectivity of our inspection evaluations. I anticipate that we will take that forward, and we will publish a protocol—indeed, we have already set out in the public domain a set of principles under which we conduct inspections. We will seek to strengthen that further and put in train a set of arrangements to make clear that any inspection evaluations and reports that are published under the Education Scotland banner will be objective and impartial, and will not be influenced by any support work in which we are involved or by political process.

Claire Baker: Marco Biagi mentioned the reduction in head count in the organisation. It can be argued that you are facing greater challenges than when the organisations were separate, and that you are trying to do so with fewer staff. However, while there has been a reduction, secondments have been used to quite a large extent in the organisation. Can you say a bit more about that?

Bill Maxwell: The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning was very clear when he announced that the bodies were being brought together that it was not being done as a budgetary reduction exercise. Indeed, the predecessor organisations were looking at similar levels of budget management—if they had continued to exist separately—as we are facing now, so we have not suffered any increased budget pressure as a result of the merger. We may find efficiencies that help us to manage the difficult budget situation that we are all in more effectively as a result of being one efficient organisation together. In that sense, it is not a big issue.

The fact that we use secondments has given us a lot of flexibility, and will continue to do so, in how we manage our head count. It is also a good thing in its own right. It is really important for us as an organisation that we have a continuous connection and throughput of current front-line practitioners who work with us for a period and then go back to their schools and classrooms around the country. That is healthy, and I would be keen for Education Scotland to continue to build that live connection with the field into its business model.

10:15

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Generally speaking, the feedback from schools is pretty positive, particularly on the reforms that have meant that inspections are based more on outcomes and much more self-appraisal is involved from the school itself. That is all very good.

Having said that, I think that one or two questions remain, which we need to convince parents about. You will be aware that the Health and Sport Committee in the previous session of Parliament raised the issue of physical education inspection and the fact that certain areas of the general inspection were not as thorough as they should be. Can you assure us that the process that you have put in place will be more rigorous in certain areas?

Bill Maxwell: Our inspection process for schools covers a number of aspects. We have our continuing annual programme of inspecting a proportion of schools across the country on a regular basis. There is a limit to what those inspections can look at in depth, but they will be targeted on and directed by self-assessments that the schools provide at the beginning. If we need to dig in more depth and look more rigorously at

certain areas of provision in any individual inspection, we will certainly do that.

Liz Smith: Let us say that a school's self-assessment had not come up with what you would consider appropriate for a proper inspection. What assessment would you make? What criteria would you use to decide whether you should dig deeper?

Bill Maxwell: I will hand over in a second to Ken Muir, who has been working on the new school inspection framework.

We have a range of detailed guidance. In effect, we need to be convinced by the evidence that schools offer us to justify the evaluations that they give of any aspect of their provision. When we feel that that evidence needs to be tested further, we will test it—we will sit in, observe lessons and look at what is happening on the ground. We can also triangulate evidence with the views of parents and pupils, as we take account of those views systematically from the beginning of the inspection process.

Liz Smith: Can you guarantee to the committee that you have taken on board some of the criticisms of the inspection process that were made in years past and raised by other parliamentary committees and that certain areas will be much more rigorously inspected?

Bill Maxwell: Yes, certainly. As you probably know, last year we went through a public process in consulting on our new inspection framework. It attracted a huge range of responses around a number of issues. We have drawn from them in designing the new framework.

Ken Muir: I will respond specifically on the PE issue. We are looking at PE in all our inspections; we committed to doing that. As part of the new inspection framework, we have shared the more detailed record of inspection findings with parents, through the chair of the parent council, in recognition of the role that parents play in supporting learners and their overall achievement. We are trying to engage with parents through the chair of the parent council, giving them the full set of evidence on the issues that the parent council may wish to discuss with the headteacher so that parents have a role in effecting improvement in the school.

PE is part of the wider curriculum, so we continue to make evaluations on the five quality indicators, three of which sit in the national performance framework. One is curriculum. If there are any issues in relation to the curriculum and the extent to which young people and children are getting a broad experience, we would comment on that and it would be taken into account in the evaluation of that particular QI.

Liz Smith: I have one final question. With the greater emphasis on a light-touch approach in some areas in the inspection process, how often could a school expect to have a full inspection?

Bill Maxwell: That is now more variable. Although we have moved away from our rigorous—or, shall we say, routine—commitment to cycle round schools regularly, we will monitor schools' performance more frequently through annual discussions with local authorities and drawing on a range of performance evidence. The principle now is that if a school looks as if it needs closer examination we will go in much quicker than we have in the past. If that is not the case, the school will come up at some point in the normal balanced inspection sample. Indeed, we might even look at schools that are performing particularly well because we want to learn more about what they are doing. The cycle is no longer fixed.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Given the absence of national tests, the fact that children will not sit tests until quite late on in their academic career and that sampling will be used to assess literacy and numeracy standards, are you confident that failing schools and areas of concern will be highlighted early enough in the process?

Bill Maxwell: Alan Armstrong, who deals with assessment, will pick up specific issues about the use of assessment data. However, I am determined to sit down with local authorities and examine a range of evidence on how each of their schools, including primary schools, is performing. Many authorities have introduced other methods of assessing pupils' confidence over and above collecting teachers' data, but the current direction of travel is to consider teachers' assessment data moderated by the local authority. Indeed, our organisation will want to be confident that authorities are moderating teachers' assessment effectively and will look on such data as important evidence of how well each school is performing.

Alan Armstrong (Education Scotland): There are two aspects to this: first, how schools are getting a handle on where their young people are; and secondly, how to share that information and ensure that they are in line with the expectations of other schools and teachers.

Schools and local authorities are thinking about ways of assessing attainment in literacy, numeracy and other areas. In some cases, they are using the methods that they used before and, in others, they are introducing new methods, ideas, standardised tests and so on. In recognition that such methods cover only certain aspects of a young person's learning in literacy and numeracy, they are supplementing all that with other evidence—and that other evidence is the focus of discussion about quality assurance and

moderation, which is a new and very important element of the policy framework for assessment. Through that, Education Scotland will be working with local authorities and schools to help them understand the effect of sharing standards between classes, schools, stages and indeed right across the country. As a result of those two aspects—getting the evidence of attainment and sharing standards with others to reach a certain understanding—local authorities should be assured of where their performance sits.

The Convener: Mr Maxwell mentioned performance evidence and Mr Armstrong referred to attainment evidence, quality evidence and just "the evidence". What type and range of evidence are we talking about? What will you actually be looking at?

Alan Armstrong: Schools will be looking at the attainment evidence with regard to a young person's literacy and numeracy and, more important, where it might be generated. After all, it cannot always be generated through tests, even though they are important in a class or any other setting. Evidence can be gathered from a wide range of activities across the curriculum. Given that literacy and numeracy are everyone's responsibility, the schools will collect evidence from across the curriculum and that richness of evidence—and its being shared with other practitioners—will allow teachers to come to a really good understanding of a young person's attainment.

The Convener: As a body that is effectively at one remove from schools and councils, how will you decide how this new light-touch regime will be used? How will you decide which schools will be inspected more often and which less often?

Bill Maxwell: In our annual engagement with each local authority, we will look across all their schools and consider the attainment evidence and any other evidence or concerns that we might have received directly about individual schools. I am also keen for every local authority and school to regularly assess parents' views about the quality of what they are getting from their schools.

The Convener: That is where I was going with my question—I was wondering what the input of parents was. I heard what you said about councils and your engagement with them; it is your engagement with parents that I am interested in.

Bill Maxwell: Individual schools and, in many cases, whole councils routinely and regularly survey the views of parents. That is the best practice, but we are actively discussing with the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland how that might be extended and supported further by us. We produce questionnaires that we use in inspections. I would like to get to a position in which we did not need to issue questionnaires when we carried out inspections because we could pick up on robust processes in schools and councils that routinely pulled in the views of parents.

The Convener: I am interested in this from a committee and a personal point of view. I am not aware of ever having been surveyed by my local authority on the performance of my daughter's school. How routine is that process across authorities?

Bill Maxwell: As I said, a number of school and authorities do that on various sampling bases—

The Convener: What number? You said that a number of authorities do it.

Bill Maxwell: I do not know, off hand. I would have to get back to you with detailed figures.

The Convener: It would be good if you could do that. I am interested to know whether the figure is two authorities or 30 authorities.

Bill Maxwell: I know that several authorities do so.

The Convener: It would be helpful if you could get back to us on that.

Bill Maxwell: Sure.

The Convener: I have a final question. One of the issues that ministers asked HMIE to look at was the educational attainment of looked-after children, which the committee is interested in. How will the new inspection regime allow you to pick up that area, given that those children are a relatively small group in the school sector?

Bill Maxwell: We are preparing some evidence for the committee specifically on our findings in that area.

We can come at that in two ways—we need to take a two-dimensional approach. Part of that is about ensuring that when we do our routine school inspections, we look at the arrangements that are in place for particularly vulnerable learners, of whom looked-after children form one of the most vulnerable groups, if not the most vulnerable group, that one typically finds in mainstream education. Equally, there are times when we need to mount a more detailed thematic study, outwith our normal cyclical inspection programme, that involves sampling in depth the provision that is available for those children. I am keen that we use both those methods appropriately to keep a handle on the extent to which the needs of our most vulnerable learners are being met.

The Convener: I look forward to receiving the information that you will provide for the committee's inquiry report.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): On curriculum for excellence, I understand that the schools inspectorate adopted quite a thorough approach, engaging with schools on coming to terms with curriculum for excellence and on how it would inspect performance in that regard. How will that be rolled out across the rest of your organisation to ensure that curriculum for excellence delivers for our children?

Bill Maxwell: As the implementation programme for curriculum for excellence has progressed and gradually been rolled out through the school system—that process has been going on for a number of years—we have gradually adjusted what we expect to see in schools by way of implementation and have issued schools with new guidance on what our inspectors expect to see. At the beginning of this term, we put out guidance to establish our expectations for all schools. As Ken Muir drafted that guidance, he might like to comment.

Ken Muir: We have tried to keep the inspection process in line with the national implementation timescale for curriculum for excellence—hence the updated advice notes.

Initially, in the early years, we looked at areas such as teachers becoming familiar with the experiences and outcomes and thinking about ways in which they might report on learner progress. We also looked at how secondary schools were thinking about delivering a broad general education from secondary 1 to secondary 3 and, more generally, at the curriculum models that they might use for the senior phase, building on, for example, work that they had done with colleges and others.

10:30

As Bill Maxwell said, we have been trying to match our inspection expectations, particularly in terms of curriculum and self-evaluation quality indicators, to make sure that schools are keeping on track with what is recognised as the national implementation timescale. Where we see particularly good practice as part of the new inspection process, we revisit it and try to create continuing professional development materials for schools that are not as far down the track so that they can see what is happening elsewhere. Where we are unhappy with the progress made and where specific areas need to be progressed, we point that out to the school and use the wider resources of the new organisation to provide appropriate support.

From September to December 2010, we held back on secondary inspections in order to provide support to secondary schools, because the sector needed support on a number of issues. Along with the education authorities, Learning and Teaching Scotland and others, we undertook 400 CPD activities with secondary schools across Scotland in order to provide support for curriculum for excellence. We are trying to move the inspection model—and what we look for in an inspection—with the national implementation timetable to make sure that it keeps to that timetable.

Jenny Marra: From that answer, it sounds as if some schools are better prepared for curriculum for excellence than others. Why is that?

Ken Muir: I think that that is true. Each school—whether it is a pre-school centre, a primary school or a secondary school—is at a different starting point in moving forward with curriculum for excellence. Based on inspection evidence, some of the schools that have strongly moved on share two characteristics. The first is that the staff have embraced the philosophy of curriculum for excellence—they see the value of interdisciplinary learning and focusing on building on experiences and outcomes. The second factor is strong leadership in delivering curriculum for excellence, either within the institution or within the authority. Schools where that has not been the case to the same extent include those where the context of the school includes large numbers of youngsters with additional support needs.

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Good morning. I want to ask about the delivery of online services in relation to the curriculum and, in particular, the witnesses' take on the glow project, which is in abeyance until we are reassured that it will work. As with curriculum for excellence, teachers have varying views on how well glow works for them. I would like you to look beyond glow 2. I think we are starting to see a curriculum that would not otherwise be available in certain high school situations. I refer to subjects that can be taken by pupils in rural schools with small numbers. I want to get a feel for where that is now.

Bill Maxwell: We should recognise that we are in a strong position in Scotland. Glow was the world's first complete intranet for schools, although some others have caught up. It was pioneering. We have 400,000 active users of glow and many million hits a week. It is a live and valuable product that has helped to extend access to subject areas that might have been hard to deliver in an individual school in a rural area. It is a strong system but technology moves at a frightening pace.

The Scottish Government, rather than Education Scotland, is handling the reprocurement, but the judgment has been made that simply reprocuring a contract that is similar to the existing one for glow—as was perhaps originally envisaged would happen—might not be the best approach to

ensure that we have enough flexibility to continue the pace of development and extension that we want the system to deliver. In all that, it is important that we maintain, build on and enhance the benefits that glow has provided.

During last winter's severe weather, many schools discovered how flexibly they could use glow and online services to keep young people engaged even though they were at home behind a wall of snow, and to keep teachers and pupils connected when they were not in the same building. Online services have great potential, but we must continue to develop and ensure that we do not tie ourselves into something that prevents us from fully exploiting that potential.

Alan Armstrong is heavily involved with glow, so perhaps he wants to comment.

Alan Armstrong: There are two aspects. One is the online service, which is the first point that Jean Urquhart mentioned. That has the full range of support materials that Education Scotland's predecessor organisations brought together to allow teachers to share good, interesting and innovative practice. There are film clips and so on. The service has about 4.5 million visits a year—it is an education website that is heavily used by people not only in Scotland but beyond. That is a central plank of curriculum for excellence support, as of course is glow, which is the second aspect. The interactive nature of glow, with schools being able to connect with other schools, has been mentioned.

The move now is to look to the future of information and communication technology and to consider which platform is best suited to harnessing the wide variety of applications and ideas that are coming on stream now and those that will arise in future. The review will consider what is the best possible option for glow, although with the basis that the content, features and concepts of glow as an entity must be maintained. The review is looking to find the best possible solution for the present, but it is also seeking to future proof the system, by making it flexible and adaptable as technology changes in the coming years.

Jean Urquhart: What are the downsides? Are there any warning signs? For example, because of budget issues, it is hard to maintain numbers of peripatetic teachers who visit schools. I wonder about an overreliance on such services. Are there circumstances in which they could be overused or abused?

Alan Armstrong: Do you mean because they are replacing peripatetic teachers?

Jean Urquhart: I am just saying that there is nothing like learning from a real person showing you how to do things.

Bill Maxwell: Personally, I do not envisage computer screens ever totally replacing human contact with a skilled professional teacher. Although we might envisage big changes in the way in which education is delivered, I do not think that that will ever disappear. We need to be a little cautious about assuming, for example, that whole subjects can be delivered through an online medium with no human interaction involved in the teaching. I do not envisage that happening in the short term.

Claire Baker: Last week, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning gave a statement on post-16 reform in which he suggested that Education Scotland could take on additional roles in several areas, but particularly in relation to quality assurance for post-16 learning and skills, and continuous improvement activity, which is currently delivered by Scotland's Colleges. I appreciate that it is less than a week since the announcement, but do you have an initial reaction to it? Do you foresee resource implications if you were to take on those additional functions?

Bill Maxwell: Those are only proposals that are out for consultation so, naturally, we will wait to see the outcome of the consultation before we become too involved in giving a view on them. However, we currently undertake quality assurance of further education college provision through the contract that we run with the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. Ken Muir could say more about that, because he in effect runs that contract, in consultation with the funding council.

We have a continuing programme of individual reviews and enhancement activities that go beyond the individual inspections and examine thematic issues across a number of colleges. The difference with the school sector is that, as you highlight, the more curricular and pedagogical support is funded through Scotland's Colleges.

On the school side, we can see ways of doing quality assurance and continuous improvement, and we can see overlaps. Curriculum for excellence, for example, applies to college provision as it does to school provision.

I certainly see logic in the proposals. If they came to pass, they would have resource implications for us. We would certainly require the resources to deliver them.

Ken Muir: We have a service level agreement with the funding council, which is renewed annually. As part of that, we undertake a number of quality assurance and quality enhancement activities, some of which are college reviews—the equivalent of college inspections, if you like.

We have subject and thematic tasks. We focus on particular areas of the curriculum in any given year; we are currently focusing on four. We have a couple of thematic tasks—for example, we recently published a report on self-evaluation across the college sector. Our college team also engages directly with the colleges themselves in a link or support role.

Many of the quality assurance and quality enhancement activities are already in place through the service level agreement.

On the quality improvement activities, we already work closely with Scotland's Colleges and staff in colleges—and have done for a number of years. We publish reports and share the outcomes of those reports in advance with Scotland's Colleges so that it can provide support to the sector on those outcomes.

There is a long history of the former HMIE and the former Scottish Further Education Unit part of Scotland's Colleges working closely together, so there is already a degree of synergy between the organisations. We have tried hard to build on that, particularly since the appointment of the most recent chief executive of Scotland's Colleges, John Henderson.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Marco Biagi started off by focusing on the coming together of various roles, but a key aspect of what you are required to do is to work closely with other inspection bodies, such as Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland, which I think has taken on the child inspection role that used to be the responsibility of HMIE.

The convener rightly pointed to the committee's interest in the provision of support for vulnerable looked-after children. The combination of roles that different bodies have in that regard needs to be as effective as it possibly can be. I know that it is early days, but how is that joint working operating? Will you touch on the skills mix that was previously required of you but which may need to change over time?

Bill Maxwell: I am very encouraged by the joint working with the other inspectorates. We are now, in effect, a new family of improvement bodies. Health Improvement Scotland, SCSWIS—I believe that it is considering changing its name—and Education Scotland have all been reprofiled recently and we come together to talk in some depth about how to build on recent work, particularly through the shared risk assessment arrangements for monitoring and scrutinising local authority performance.

We also discuss how to extend that work further, beyond local authorities, to examine how children's services are delivered across community planning partnership areas, for example. The Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland are leading on work that involves us and SCSWIS quite deeply on how we tie together all our intelligence on children's services across the getting it right for every child agenda, taking in local authorities and other partners, such as the health service and the police. That is a continuing direction of travel and we need to build on that work further.

When we passed the lead for child protection inspections to SCSWIS, some of our staff went with that. However, we retain many staff who have skills in broader areas of children's services inspection. We will continue to be engaged in joint inspections. With SCSWIS, we are looking at children's services inspection more generally and considering a methodology for that. I am sure that joint scrutiny, joint inspection and joint improvement work is a flavour that we will increasingly develop.

10:45

Liam McArthur: Do you expect that work to take on a formalised structure? As Liz Smith said, your approach to undertaking inspections has changed markedly. I presume that SCSWIS—we all look forward to its name change—will have its own approach. How are those approaches dovetailing? Will who takes more of a lead depend on the issues that you are examining?

Bill Maxwell: We are working closely and jointly with SCSWIS on its new methodologies—for example, it is adapting methodologies for whatever will come after the current round of child protection inspections finishes. A good blend can be achieved of inspection styles that pick up effectively how institutions are functioning and other inspection styles, such as the child protection ones that we pioneered, which focus on an individual's needs and consider how all the services engage with an individual young person, learner or whoever. To reach a rounded view about how well the system is working, one wants to consider provision through both those lenses.

Liam McArthur: You touched on the process for the learner and the inspection agency, but it is obvious that all this places an enormous pressure on people in the teaching profession. The McCormac review noted that

"A teacher in Scotland not only needs the necessary skills and confidence to deliver a high quality education programme, but must also have the capacity to interact with the wider set of services responsible for the welfare of children."

What additional support do you have to provide to ensure that teachers feel supported in the complex role that they now play? I suspect that that question is more for Alan Armstrong.

Bill Maxwell: There is an increasing need for the ability to engage with a wider range of professionals who might come into play in meeting the needs of any child or young person to be part of the core competence of teachers or educators. That is acknowledged in the broad vision of the four competences of curriculum for excellence, which recognise that the job of education is more than just delivering learning in the traditional sense—it involves creating confident individuals, responsible citizens and so on.

Alan Armstrong might want to flag up some issues.

Alan Armstrong: For several years, in the support agenda for health and wellbeing and for looked-after and accommodated children, we have had several lines of work and programmes that involve a link with health professionals. We work closely with health authorities on how we can support their priorities in schools. A rich blend involves the former LTS—now Education Scotland—working with other agencies to support young people.

Liam McArthur: Ken Muir talked about the support that was provided from September to December last year. Was the work that you have just described a key element of that support, or was it just part and parcel of the overall support?

Ken Muir: In some specific cases, authorities and schools requested such targeted support. However, the additional support that we offered for curriculum for excellence in secondary schools last year tended to cover more general issues, such as management, change management, the curriculum structure, how to embed the experiences and outcomes and how to deal with some assessment requirements. Some of the activities that we undertook—as I said, we had more than 400 CPD activities—concerned more specifically how to deliver on additional support needs and how to offer CPD in that area.

The Convener: Members have no further questions, so I thank you very much for coming in, gentlemen. Your organisation has had an interesting start. I know that you are a new organisation and I am sure that the committee will take a keen interest in your work over the next few years. I thank you again for coming along and helping us with a witness session on Education Scotland.

I announce a brief suspension to allow us to set up agenda item 2.

10:50

Meeting suspended.

10:58

On resuming—

Teacher Employment

The Convener: Good morning. The second item on the agenda is a review of teacher employment in Scotland and a round-table discussion on the McCormac review, which was recently published.

Professor McCormac published his report only last week. I am sure that members and witnesses will have had the chance to digest it. Professor McCormac will appear before the committee next week, when we will question him. We wanted to discuss some of the key issues today with some key stakeholders, as that will assist us in questioning Professor McCormac next week.

There is a large number of people around the table this morning. We will not be able to cover all 30 recommendations in the time that is available so, if it is at all possible, we will stick to the main ones. There are some themes that we want to bring out in the debate.

Obviously, our discussion is on the record and will be in the *Official Report*; it is not an off-the-record or informal discussion, but I would like it to be as free-flowing as we can manage with this number of people. Free-flowing is one thing, but we want to avoid a free-for-all.

I am sure that you understand the difficulties of managing the discussion, given the number of people around the table. I would appreciate it if both members and witnesses could indicate when they want to participate, discuss a certain issue or throw in a comment or question, although I will try to make the discussion as open and free-flowing as possible. Finally, I want to avoid jumping from theme to theme and from area to area. We will try, if possible, to discuss one area and move on to the next.

We have slightly over an hour and a half before some of us have to move on to another committee meeting. We will try to get as much possible done in that time.

I begin by asking committee members and witnesses to very briefly introduce themselves, so that we can rattle round the table.

Clare Adamson: I am a Central Scotland list MSP.

Andrew Sutherland (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities): Good morning. My substantive post is head of schools in East Ayrshire. I am an Association of Directors of Education in Scotland adviser and today I am representing the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Liz Smith: I am a Conservative member for Mid Scotland and Fife.

John Stodter (Association of Directors of Education in Scotland): I am the general secretary of ADES.

Pam Nesbitt (Association of Headteachers and Deputes in Scotland): I am the president of the Association of Headteachers and Deputes in Scotland.

George Adam: I am Paisley's member of the Scottish Parliament.

Jim Thewliss (School Leaders Scotland): Good morning. In my day job, I am the headteacher of Harris academy in Dundee. This morning, I am representing School Leaders Scotland, as its president.

Jenny Marra: Good morning. I am a Labour member for North East Scotland.

George Jamieson (National Parent Forum of Scotland): I represent the National Parent Forum of Scotland. I lead the policy group.

Eileen Prior (Scottish Parent Teacher Council): Good morning. I am from the Scottish Parent Teacher Council.

Drew Morrice (Educational Institute of Scotland): Good morning. I am from the Educational Institute of Scotland. [*Interruption*.] I am trying to drown my colleague on my left.

The Convener: I was not going to mention that, but it is on the record now.

Jean Urquhart: Good morning. I am a list MSP for the Highlands and Islands region.

Ann Ballinger (Scottish Secondary Teachers Association): Good morning. I am the general secretary of the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association. Before that, I was a teacher.

Liam McArthur: I am the Liberal Democrat member for Orkney.

Alan Robertson (Voice): Good morning. I am a teacher in Fife and I am at the committee representing Voice, as the vice-chair of its Scottish executive committee.

Marco Biagi: I am the SNP MSP for Edinburgh Central.

Jane Peckham (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers): Good morning. I am the Scottish organiser for the NASUWT and I am a former primary school teacher.

Claire Baker: Good morning. I am a Labour MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife. I am also the deputy convener of the committee.

The Convener: I am the convener of the committee as well as an SNP MSP for the West of Scotland.

I thank you all for coming along this morning. We obviously have a lot to get through.

I begin the discussion by raising what I see as being a key theme of the report, which is Professor McCormac's views on flexibility. For example, an issue that has got some attention is the report's recommendation that teachers' class-contact hours should be spread over a longer period—perhaps a week or a month; certainly a longer period—and should not be so tightly controlled. The report also mentions a number of other issues, including whether the set tasks should be abolished. I ask witnesses each to provide a quick response. I will then throw it open to committee members and others to follow on. As I see it, flexibility is one of the overarching objectives of the report, and its purpose is obviously to improve outcomes for pupils, so will the report's focus on teacher flexibility help to achieve that?

Jane Peckham: To be frank, no: we do not think that flexibility will improve outcomes. The problem with flexibility is that working arrangements might be imposed rather than negotiated with teachers. At the moment, teachers have some flexibility in how they manage their non-contact time. If time is aggregated across more than a week, there is potential for quite a few difficulties unless it is carefully managed. I think that it would give carte blanche to ignore some of the boundaries. We do not believe that flexibility would improve matters.

Alan Robertson: I agree with that, on the whole. There is room for some flexibility, but teachers are already very flexible in their working hours. The problem is that it might be taken to extremes. As Jane Peckham was saying, it might be more imposed than negotiated, which could be a major problem.

Ann Ballinger: I will not say anything different. I do not think that more flexibility will improve matters. Teachers are already very flexible. As Professor McCormac suggested, the vast majority of teachers work a great deal more than 35 hours a week. Those who do not will still count the hours. The proposals in the review are not a solution to that problem; the solution is to discuss the problem with those teachers and find out how best to solve it.

I do not foresee increasing flexibility improving education either. The vast majority of schools—I am speaking only for secondary schools—are already very flexible in their approach. There is collegiate working across departments, and with primary schools in the catchment area. There is

nothing in the review to add a new element that would benefit learning and teaching. The review simply rehashes all the things that are already being done and possibly recommends that they are done with less flexibility.

Drew Morrice: Just to make it four in a row for the teachers unions, we think that the proposal will not assist teaching and learning and will, in fact, be counterproductive. It will encourage an approach by teachers that could be portrayed as clock-watching. Teachers will seek to protect their conditions, and they will seek to protect those conditions that are linked to the key task of working with their own class and their own pupils and any tasks that are connected with that.

Annualisation of hours operates not very successfully in England and Wales. It also operates in the further education sector—again, not very successfully because it encourages people to work to contract, which is not particularly helpful.

The key issue here is that Professor McCormac has ducked and disregarded the issue of teacher workload. Flexibility seems to be a replacement for addressing that issue by assuming that people will work more and longer. He has missed the point.

Eileen Prior: Parents, particularly in primary schools, tell us that there are concerns about how non-contact time is managed. They tell us of classes being pulled together and occupied for a time rather than teaching going on for that time. There is evidence of poor practice in how non-contact time is managed. To me, though, that is a management issue.

I could not comment on whether aggregating the non-contact time will lead to improvement. That is not really for parents to say. What we can say is that we have concerns about the way in which non-contact time is managed, particularly in the primary sector.

George Jamieson: I echo the previous comment. That also happens in secondary schools, where it is not unusual to perceive non-contact time as babysitting, or dead time. It is a pragmatic decision, though—sometimes it has to happen.

At the risk of alienating all the teachers from the word go, I have to say that we see no problem with flexibility. As Eileen Prior pointed out, this is all about management and professionalism. Every other profession has to evolve and react to changing circumstances; the curriculum for excellence clearly emphasises teamwork and collaboration and we should be open to all of that. It will rely on good leadership and collaboration rather than on imposition, but we should not be frightened of change. We have the opportunity to try to get things right. We should not stick with the status quo because it has problems; instead, we need to take a deeper look at the issue and to be open-minded about things. Parents are all for that.

Jim Thewliss: I agree with my colleagues on the other side of the table to a degree. In the 10 years since McCrone, the profession has developed along collegiality and trust lines. We are certainly very open-minded about expanding flexibility and we certainly see opportunities for working together with our school colleagues in order to provide a much more flexible and joined-up service for young people in schools. Given that the report is predicated on young people's needs, we see this as an opportunity to develop such thinking within the flexibility that is given by staff in schools.

Pam Nesbitt: Like Jim Thewliss, I agree with some of the comments that have been made so far. However, we might be slightly at odds over how the management is led in schools. Ann Ballinger is absolutely right to say that professionalism is going to vary in schools; indeed, some teachers are deemed to be clock watchers while others give well over the 35 hours' professional input.

We believe that the situation could be improved by managing things differently in the short weeks of a school session—in other words, the weeks in which there might be a Monday holiday, a bank holiday, an in-service day or whatever. In the local authority where I work, for example, teachers get the time on the day it is timetabled, no matter whether it is a short week, so some are winners and some are losers.

As for the primary 7 profiles that are about to be introduced, we need to be able to look at them across a whole school session and manage them according to needs at various stages. As someone who works in the primary sector, I know that primary 7 teachers would welcome a little bit of extra time to deal not only with the primary 7 profiles but with reports. In any event, leadership is crucial.

On the issue of removing duties—which you raised, convener, but no one has touched on yet—the McCormac review says that there is no need to revise duties, but then suddenly recommends that they be removed altogether. I do not think that that is what people meant. We are concerned that removing annex E of the teachers' agreement might lead to the number of support staff in schools being diminished and might, in fact, be seen as an open door for removing very valuable members of staff such as auxiliaries and classroom assistants.

John Stodter: The compartmentalisation of hours, the specification of duties and so on were developed to safeguard teachers' terms and

conditions at a time when teachers themselves lacked confidence about their profession. Those times have passed and the issue of flexibility is as much about attempting a culture shift as it is about the mechanisms of managing the day.

The report suggests that instead of looking at the profession from the point of view of duties, tasks and specifications, we should shift the whole thing towards looking at outcomes for children. Indeed, it cites evidence that good high-performing schools try to meet children's needs in the wide context. In Scotland, we have built a good context through curriculum for excellence and getting it right for every child, but it will be difficult to manage that if, at the same time, we have to look in pretty fine detail on a week-to-week basis at the number of hours we have spent on different tasks. The issue is about teachers' having confidence that this is not an attempt to increase the workload, because that is clearly not its aim. The report sets on record the number of hours that teachers work beyond their contractual obligation.

11:15

We want to be flexible in how we meet children's needs, and that desire is not best served by having hours, and the duties allocated to those hours, specified and worked out each week. The report will lead to better outcomes, because the new focus is the one that we require to define the profession.

Andrew Sutherland: I agree with most of what John Stodter said. The report acknowledges that we are considering a curriculum from the ages of three to 18; and it also acknowledges that teachers will be responsible for their classes for the whole of a period. If there were to be changes to times, teachers would be in control of those.

The report acknowledges that to manage better the outcomes for children, planning over the course of a year is a very good thing. For example, if you want to develop certain entitlements in outdoor education or work experience, you can plan that holistically. I believe that the flexibility that is suggested by the report can enhance that.

I understand the anxieties over workload and how it will be managed. However, if we adopt a collegiate spirit and understand that we are all working together for the outcomes of young people, and if we acknowledge—as specified in the report—that it is teachers who are responsible for that, we will have a better system. Flexibility will improve outcomes.

The Convener: I thank everyone for their comments and invite members to ask questions.

Liam McArthur: This may be a daft-laddie question. We have been given a mixed picture, and some people are managing within the present system with adequate flexibility. Those people clearly have no concerns about the roll-out of curriculum for excellence. That point was echoed during our evidence session with Education Scotland this morning.

John Stodter talked about structure and rigidity in the system. Have teachers agreed to set that rigidity aside and to work more flexibly, waiving rights that may be built into the system? If that is so, what is the impediment to expanding on that, without creating situations that could make certain elements of the teaching profession apprehensive—depending on their relationship with their local authority—that their position could be abused, leading to their having more work?

John Stodter: That is a good analysis of the situation, and the question is probably rhetorical. The present context is not favourable for giving confidence in being more flexible and more embracing of changes to terms and conditions. Councils fully expect to have to make reductions, and that will impinge on education. Other issues arise to do with pensions, for example.

In a different context, teachers might feel more confident and less apprehensive that the proposed step was logical in taking down some of the compartments and reflecting what many teachers already do. Teachers do not clock watch and do not count how many hours they have spent on something, but they do complain if they are being overworked, and good headteachers are able to manage that.

When a system has 32 different councils and many hundred different headteachers and styles of management, legislation can be difficult. Legislation often tries to chase good practice, and I would hope that everybody can see something positive in the report and can see that it is not an attempt simply to squeeze more out of teachers, to increase their workload, or to do things on the cheap. Flexibility should be a fundamental principle of any profession; all professions are encouraged to work flexibly in order to meet the needs of the people whom they serve.

Clare Adamson: Recommendation 28 says that primary teachers should be responsible for the education of their class, even if they are not physically in the classroom. Outdoor education has been mentioned in that regard, as has the possibility that experts could be brought into the school. How do you envisage the teacher being responsible for the education of the class if he or she is not present?

Andrew Sutherland: Part of the answer lies in how the teacher plans what they are going to do

with their class in the course of a session. There will need to be a clear set of entitlements that a teacher wants that class to have. The teacher will still have 855 hours of teaching time in the course of a year. However, the differential with regard to the teacher's contact with a young person is about 21 days, or four weeks. The teacher could theoretically say, "In the four-week period when I am not teaching pupils in the class, I want them to have a range of different experiences delivered by others."

With regard to collaboration, we can take outdoor learning as one example of an experience that can be delivered in, say, one of those weeks—broken up over the year and built into the curriculum programme for the session. You can see how that flows, in terms of the learning journey. Interdisciplinary working can also be planned so that it takes up reasonable chunks of time.

That is the key point that the McCormac report was getting at. The report was clear that it was not in favour of increasing the amount of class-contact time that teachers have. It is important to remember that. It recognised what the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report said about teaching hours. Nevertheless, it also recognised that teachers are responsible for their class for the duration of a period. I do not know any teachers who would not take that responsibility anyway, as a matter of good practice.

Drew Morrice: I will deal with that matter in a moment, but first I would like to talk about the point that John Stodter raised about the climate of trust. Professor McCormac seems to hold the Scottish negotiating committee for teachers to account for failing to move to stage 4 of the 2001 agreement. However, the evidence that the SNCT commissioned from the University of Glasgow, which was endorsed by all three parties who are involved in the SNCT, showed that the SNCT itself was failing to address the issue of teacher workload. That failure has continued since the publication of the report—I say that as joint secretary on the teachers' side of the SNCT. Teachers will have been looking for the McCormac report to suggest a way that would allow them to tackle the question of workload, but I think that that opportunity has been missed.

On Clare Adamson's point, I think that the idea that a teacher is responsible for their class in the round is outdated. When a primary teacher teaches a class, they teach aspects of the curriculum, and they trust that a teacher who is coming in to deliver other aspects of the curriculum will pick that up and take responsibility for the planning, recording and assessment of the work that goes on during that time. Professor McCormac is almost taking us back to a previous period, when the teacher was solely responsible for everything that went on.

I do not disagree with Andrew Sutherland's point about there being different ways to set things out, but I do not think that the detail of that comes across in Professor McCormac's report at all. It will be hard to deliver that in a constructive and meaningful way. I think that the report is open to misinterpretation by people who are seeking to diminish the role of teachers as the prime deliverers of education. We saw that in Renfrewshire not too long ago when there was an attempt by the council to bypass—there is no other way to describe it—the role of registered teachers. Teachers will want reassurance that they are to be the prime facilitators of education. Teachers working with other professionals is a different matter from someone coming in to replace the registered teacher.

Ann Ballinger: On the issue of flexibility and the comments that were made about opening the door and flexing the parameters, there is a good reason why we never reached stage 4 of the programme that was set out in "A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century", which concerned collegiality: it proved to be impossible to be absolutely certain that collegiality was working in every school in every local authority area.

There are some schools where very good practice takes place—there is no doubt about that. However, there are other schools where the word "collegiate" never enters the door. In those schools, members of staff will be looking at the document and thinking that the small protection that they have of a fixed number of hours available to do things is being removed from them. I honestly do not know any teacher who looks at their watch and says, "Okay, I've done five hours of children's reports now; I'm not doing any more for the rest of the session." They do what they have to do. The current system simply means that they know that there are five hours set aside for that, which cannot be used for anything else. If we are going to remove that, we have to be very careful that we look at teacher workload properly and ensure that there is adequate provision in place to protect them.

Pam Nesbitt: I want to follow up on Drew Morrice's point first. In many of the recommendations, the devil will be in the detail. We, too, have concerns about misinterpretations of some of them. Clare Adamson mentioned a possible misinterpretation about the difference between responsibility for a class and planning, delivery, assessment, recording and so on.

In many schools with which I have contact, we already work a system whereby certain curricular areas are delivered through non-contact time. A

teacher is designated to deliver that and does all the planning and tracking. Where the responsibility comes in is in the shared discussion and collegiate approach whereby they say, "These are the outcomes we're covering and this is the curriculum area we're doing," so that we do not get crossover and double delivery. We are trying to reduce that. I think that "decluttering the curriculum" was the original phrase that was used, yet we still have heaps and heaps of outcomes to deliver. It is about being creative and ensuring that outcomes can be delivered in the best way possible for the children.

We do not have concerns about sharing the workload, but we do about other providers coming in. I cannot remember which recommendation this is in—I think it is the one about external experts—but, as a headteacher, I am slightly alarmed by the phrase:

"Headteachers should determine whether these individuals may work directly with a class on their own."

We need to have safeguards in place for things like that.

Liam McArthur talked about headteachers who might abuse the system in respect of staff terms and conditions. Again, it is about safeguards and the interpretation of all these recommendations. There needs to be a bit of thinking through. Responsibility is different from planning, delivery, assessment and tracking and so on.

George Jamieson: We would be in favour of recommendation 28 and we do not want to take it as a compromise or a challenge. Clearly, the teacher—or, to be more accurate, the team of teachers—should control the curriculum. We see that there is a massive resource in other professions and in parents, who could be involved in delivering something that is in line with the curriculum. We are very keen to promote the teaching profession being more outward looking and engaging with things outwith education. We are in other professions; although we are not educationists, we have much to offer, yet that is not happening. We see the recommendation as a way of teachers maintaining their control of the curriculum. There is no threat to teachers; it is adding to the mix. If we are going forward—as the world is—in an ever-changing, evolving process, our kids need all the help they can get. Teachers, by the very nature of their job, are immersed in education. Most teachers go to school, go to university and then come back to school. People in other professions do not do that, so they have much to offer that is complementary to the teaching profession. Anybody who comes in has to be under the control of the school, the teacher and the headteacher, but we have to open the door to that opportunity. We feel very strongly that there is a massive opportunity there. It is no threat to teachers; it is about taking a collaborative approach.

Jane Peckham: Recommendation 28 is one of the ones that most concern us—previous colleagues have talked about workload. Primary teachers already take responsibility for the education of their class and are very much liaising with the people who cover the remainder of the time that they are not in the classroom. The wording of recommendation 28, which says that primary school teachers are "not necessarily" required to be in the classroom, is very much open to misinterpretation.

Recommendation 28 can only increase a teacher's workload. We undertook a survey of our Scottish members in the summer term, and 63 per cent of teachers cited workload as their top issue. That brings us back to the issue to do with teachers' confidence in embracing change at the current time—John Stodter mentioned the pension changes. More than half the teachers who responded to our survey had considered leaving the profession in the past year. We cannot ignore that. Teachers currently do not have confidence in positive outcomes from recommendations such as recommendation 28. We need to be careful about how far we push the issue.

11:30

Jean Urquhart: My question is also on recommendation 28 and was provoked by what Drew Morrice said about teachers not being responsible for what happens in their class. Perhaps it is a question of interpretation, as Pam Nesbitt said. Surely a class teacher feels responsible for her pupils and their development and should feel confident to delegate work to people who come into the classroom when she is not there.

People are entirely responsible for work that they might have delegated to hundreds of people. They must manage the situation; they cannot leave the work to someone else and not check up on what happened. I presume that it is of huge interest to a teacher to know that a session in which someone else came into the classroom had the expected outcome. Who else would be responsible for that? I cannot get my head round the idea that the teacher would not be responsible. If she or he was not sure that things would be done properly, I presume that they would not initiate the session. I am confused.

The Convener: We have covered quite a lot of issues. Do people want to come back in on anything?

Andrew Sutherland: I will pick up on a couple of issues. First, it has been interesting listening to the discussion, but we must not forget that we are

talking about pupil outcomes. That is fundamental; it is what the report is all about. I understand the anxiety that colleagues expressed about how things are managed. I take that on board; it is an important issue. However, if we are all working to the same purpose—that is, for the benefit of young people—and there is managed workload, I think that we can achieve what is required and the proposed flexibility will enhance the process. It is important that we remember that.

Secondly, on recommendation 28, there is increasingly a recognition, which is perhaps long overdue, that a school is not the only centre of learning in a community. There is a rich tapestry of people out there who can assist with learning, as George Jamieson said. It is incumbent on educators to ensure that we tap into all the groups and individuals in a community who can help our young people to develop properly. Teachers have a key role in that regard—in a collegiate and partnership way. It is not about workload but about a recognition of what a proper, integrated, fully developed curriculum for excellence is about.

The Convener: Pam Nesbitt said that the abolition of set lists of tasks would have an impact on support staff, in particular. What did you mean?

Pam Nesbitt: I meant that local authorities might regard that as a reason not to employ support staff in schools, because they will not be required to undertake the duties in annex E.

The Convener: Because teachers themselves will undertake those duties?

Pam Nesbitt: Yes.

The Convener: On the day when McCormac published his report, I was listening to Radio Scotland. Many teachers texted or phoned in to say, "We already do this stuff."

Pam Nesbitt: They do some of it. They choose to do some of it in their own time, given their working hours. Classroom assistants and auxiliaries work much shorter hours than teachers do, so if a teacher wants something photocopied for 9 am the next day, they will stay and do it at 5 o'clock at night. However, there is a danger that the small number of support staff that we have left, particularly in the primary sector, will be diminished further if annex E is taken away. Authorities were asked to detail how they spent the money that they were given for the implementation of annex E, which showed that the ways in which it was done varied widely. For some authorities, it involved support staff but, in others, it was information technology systems. There is a concern that, if something is taken away, that is seen as budget driven rather than a professional issue.

The Convener: I think that you wanted to comment on something else.

Pam Nesbitt: I want to clarify the issue that Jean Urquhart mentioned about the teacher wanting to know what is happening. The people who deliver the contact time are often fully qualified and registered teachers who do exactly the same as the class teacher would do. One year, they might be a class teacher, but the next year they might deliver a subject area across three or four stages in a school. It is like working with a stage partner. For example, two primary 4 teachers might work together and collaborate.

I was really picking up on secondary models. When a subject is delivered by visiting specialists, such as those who deliver physical education and music—although they are a rapidly diminishing resource, too—they do their own planning and reporting for staff, because they have the same contracts and are under the same terms and conditions as class teachers. The class teacher has responsibility, but the person who delivers the contact time, if they are a teacher, also has a responsibility to deliver and plan. That is why I said that it is about communication between colleagues, rather than a defined situation in which the teacher says, "I must know exactly what is going on." The other person is a professional, too, and should deliver quality education. It is our role as managers to carry out quality assurance of what is going on in our schools and to ensure that the system is working.

Marco Biagi: I was interested in the analysis from the parent groups of the problem with McCrone time and pupil outcomes. Ann Ballinger talked about departments not recognising collegiate working. Do teachers share the analysis that the McCrone-time effect on pupils is a problem in some schools? Given the clear scepticism about the idea that flexibility is the way to address the issue, what do teachers see as the solution?

Drew Morrice: Pam Nesbitt gave the answer to the question about McCrone time. Eileen Prior raised the issue about grouping pupils together for assembly to observe the McCrone time rules, but that is simply a management or resource issue. There will be different opinions from the teachers unions on whether schools are properly collegiate, but I do not think that teachers are comfortable that schools are properly collegiate and work in a collegiate manner.

To return to Andrew Sutherland's point, until schools are properly collegiate, the key thing to improve learning and teaching is the morale of teachers in schools. In the previous couple of years, teachers have taken a bit of a beating. We appreciate that that is in part to do with economic circumstances, but that context makes teachers

fearful, which John Stodter touched on. In that climate of fear, McCormac is positing an ideal solution, or an academic theory about taking things forward that is not rooted in the practical reality of where schools and teachers are.

John Stodter: On the practical reality, two positive examples have been cited today of flexibility and having people other than teachers contributing but with teachers still being in control. The first is that, in primary schools, there can be residential courses of three or five days. The class teacher does not always attend those, although teachers will be involved. The teacher will still want to know what the learning outcomes were so that they can build on them. In secondary education, there is work experience. Teachers do not observe children all day, every day during work experience. Children report that those are positive and helpful approaches.

Depending on the way in which you interpret the words and the attitude in your head when you do so, they could be seen as a threat or as taking existing good practice and trying to make it common practice.

Jim Thewliss: To come back to the notion of practical reality, we are in the throes of constructing a hugely flexible curriculum that will make all sorts of unknown demands on the profession. As it begins to develop, we need to look at what we are asking young people to do. The report might be forward looking, but it rests on where we currently sit and the way in which we are planning our curriculum for the future.

I take on board John Stodter's point that the profession is feeling particularly vulnerable at present, given the cuts that are going on. However, the report has the potential to take us into the future with regard to the way in which we use teaching time in schools to meet the needs of young people in a curricular pattern—to return to my point—that will be vastly different from where we are just now.

We must consider the issue flexibly from where we currently stand, as opposed to retrenching. To us, it seems that the report takes a very positive view.

The Convener: I will try to wrap up that topic, although I know that we have barely scratched the surface, and it is clearly very important to everyone who is involved in education.

John Stodter asked earlier what exactly the words mean, and it is clear that there are different interpretations of some of Professor McCormac's recommendations. I am sure that we will ask Professor McCormac what they mean when he appears before us next week. It is interesting to note that some of the recommendations have been interpreted almost in opposite ways—on the one hand, there is flexibility, and on the other, there is inflexibility. The report may not be as clear as I first thought when I read it, but I am sure that he will help us to understand it a little better next week.

We will move on to the second area for discussion.

Claire Baker: Part of the pursuit of teacher flexibility is about how we improve outcomes for young people. The report mentions the career structure in the profession. Do Professor McCormac's proposals provide appropriate incentives for teachers?

There has been a huge amount of discussion about chartered teacher status. Do the proposals contain enough options for career progression? What are the current limitations on career progression in the sector?

I got the feeling from reading the report that the current agreement suits secondary teachers more than primary teachers, and that there are fewer options for career progression in the primary sector. Has Professor McCormac brought forward any improvements in that area?

The Convener: There are some interesting topics in this area, such as the end of chartered teacher status and the more imaginative use of principal teacher grades, which are radical changes to the current situation. I am sure that the committee would be interested to hear the witnesses' views on that.

Ann Ballinger: I will kick off with a question: what career progression? I am talking about secondary schools, as I know that the situation is different in primary schools. In the past 10 years, we have moved away from a situation in which there would be 17 principal teachers in a secondary school, so that in a particular department there would always be an opportunity to seek an assistant principal teacher or principal teacher post. The normal progression in a big department was to move to an APT position in maths or English and then to a principal teacher post, assuming that one had the relevant skills. That does not happen any more. If we are very lucky, we may find 10 principal teachers or faculty heads in a big secondary school, so the opportunities for an ordinary teacher to progress in their career are extremely limited—I will not say that they are non-existent, but they are extremely limited. Under such progression as there is the teacher leaves teaching behind and almost becomes a manager, because if a teacher manages three departments, the amount of time that they have to teach is extremely limited.

11:45

The alternative route, which was intended to keep teachers in the classroom but allow them to have some career progression, was the chartered teacher scheme. I will certainly not sit here and say that that scheme was wonderful, because there were huge flaws in it. We were very hopeful that Professor McCormac would examine the scheme and amend it appropriately. We hoped that he would make it more classroom focused, more focused on proven ability in teaching and less focused on academic achievement. That has not happened, and he recommended that the scheme be removed, so I ask again: what progression?

Pam Nesbitt: There are a number of links with other current reports and reviews, such as the Donaldson review. The General Teaching Council for Scotland is also working on professional update, and it is sometimes hard to see the wood for the trees with all the things that are going on in relation to career progression and professional development.

We are pleased that a robust and consistent form of professional review and development is at the heart of the McCormac review. Every teacher, principal teacher, deputy headteacher and headteacher has the right to professional review at regular points throughout their career and to consider what the pathway will be through their career. That should be discussed regularly with all members of staff in education.

Ann Ballinger is right that it is different in the primary sector. We were delighted to welcome principal teachers into the primary sector because that was a move forward. We lost assistant heads, but principal teachers came in their place, which was very positive for us.

However, I agree that there are concerns about reduced capacity just now, because of budget cuts. Prior to coming into the committee meeting, we discussed the extent of cuts that have had to be made in the promoted-post structures in schools. There are fewer jobs. There is a pathway and a career structure, but there are not enough opportunities for people to take up.

I will comment on the flexible principal teacher recommendation in the review. As a professional development opportunity, it sounds like a wonderful idea. However, I would be concerned if it replaced substantive principal teachers in any sector. It should be seen as a method, through PRD and CPD, of finding out about how to do that job and taking it forward, but there should still be opportunities for a teacher to go on and become a permanent substantive PT.

My last point is on recommendation 9, which is about the mobility of all teachers, including headteachers. It is a clear message: we do not welcome any idea of rolling contracts or of teachers being in and out of schools over a rolling period. However, if the recommendation is seen as a good professional development opportunity for a period of time, and if it is well matched and well managed, it will be positive. How it is interpreted and implemented will be crucial.

The Convener: I was going to raise recommendation 9, but you have done so, so I will leave it at that.

Jane Peckham: I agree with Ann Ballinger and Pam Nesbitt. Particularly in the primary sector, there is no opportunity to progress. The number of posts has been seriously reduced for the reasons stated.

The proposed removal of the chartered teacher grade is interesting, because that grade was never intended to be a career progression post. It was a recognition of good classroom practice, although it has been used as a route to promotion.

The curriculum involves a lot more cross-curricular and collegiate working. The result of that is more competition for principal teacher posts and faculty head posts, which reduces the number that are available.

Like Pam Nesbitt, I have some concerns about the temporary principal teacher posts that are mentioned in the review. There is a bit of confusion over what that role might be and how long it might be in place. Could that resource be taken away suddenly, which would affect the running of the school? Even worse, could it result in a face-fits scenario for appointments to such posts. If a teacher were to ingratiate themselves in some way with their local school, would they then get the post?

Ann Ballinger was correct to ask, “What career progression?” There are far fewer opportunities now than there were years ago.

Drew Morrice: I disagree with what Jane Peckham said, because I think that the chartered teacher post was part of the career structure. It provided the opportunity for those who chose to remain in the classroom to do so. That was one of the key elements of the 2001 agreement, but it appears to be lost.

Ann Ballinger is correct about the promoted-post structure. It is amazing that, in a country the size of Scotland, there are 32 varieties of promoted-post structures. If there was a consensus about what the promotion structure should look like and that was applied uniformly across councils, there would be scope for budgets to allow for flexible promotion arrangements for principal teachers and so on. The problem with the recommendation is that it seems to be a substitute or surrogate for

some current structural points. I agree with Pam Nesbitt's point, because a career structure that does not give people time to do the job is counterproductive. The reduction in management time as well as the reduction in posts recently has confused the whole idea of the 2001 agreement.

Chartered teachers in particular feel betrayed by the McCormac review. I am sure that committee members' postbags will reflect what I receive in my postbag, which is the view that chartered teachers have been cut adrift. To return to one of my earlier criticisms of Professor McCormac, he disregards what the SNCT has done since 2001. The code of practice for chartered teachers and the revised standard for chartered teachers that the GTC developed provided a lot of focus for what chartered teachers are about. We should not disregard the added extra that chartered teachers, who are working to masters level, have brought to the quality of education in schools. If it is about improving pupil outcomes, chartered teachers have by and large delivered on that, although I accept that there are some criticisms at the edges.

There is also a practical issue here for the SNCT because Professor McCormac recommends disestablishing the post. The SNCT will have to do a lot of work to ensure that that is done in a way that protects the people who invested their time and money to achieve a masters-equivalent level and brought that to bear in the classroom.

George Jamieson: There are many things to cover there. As a basic principle, what parents want to see is good, motivated teachers and an implicit commitment that, whether morale is high or low, pupils do not suffer. That is key. We would like to see all teachers being "good". We would like the good teachers to become very good and to have career progression. Whether their skill lies in the classroom or in management, they should have a natural career progression route.

The chartered teacher route is correct in principle. There seems to be doubt about whether the building up of CVs and qualifications contributes to outcomes for children, but that is a matter of semantics. I believe that there should be a route for exceptionally talented people. However, ultimately, it must be delivered in the classroom. I am very encouraged by the focus on CPD, appraisal, leadership and training. We have probably all been in jobs in which those aspects have been good, bad or indifferent. It is fundamental to a profession such as teaching that it can be trusted to empower and progress good teachers and that the clock-watchers, who have been mentioned often, stay where they are and get developed. That is all about leadership and appraisal.

I have a wee anecdote. When the child of every parent sitting around here moves to the next year, the parents will want a list of the teachers. Most parents will say things like, "Oh, goodness me, they've not got him, have they?" or, "Great! They've got that one." We would like to take such statements away. We want to be able to trust every teacher to deliver good outcomes for our children. We want to empower the good, motivated teachers who do the extras. If there is a team ethic, the skivers will be found out. That happens in every profession. In my job, if one of our team was a skiver, he would be found out. We therefore need good appraisal and leadership and motivated teachers.

That is a bit round the houses, but that is basically where parents are coming from. We want to be able to trust teachers who are motivated and we believe that such motivation should be rewarded. The career structure needs to be such that the best progress and that there are posts for them.

Eileen Prior: What he said. [*Laughter*.] The only point that I will add is that we absolutely endorse the recommendation that all staff in a school should be entitled to access the development process. We hear much parental concern about the quality of some support staff, such as learning assistants; about the roles that they fulfil; and/or about the fact that learning assistants have rolling contracts from year to year, which means little consistency and no motivation for them to up their skills. Such staff do not have access to career development and professional development, which we absolutely agree that they should have. If we want teachers to have good, strong support in classrooms, we must put in place the mechanisms to make that happen.

Jim Thewliss: I will return to the vexed problem of chartered teacher status. I would shed no tears over the removal of that status. I might take issue a wee bit with Drew Morrice's point that the scheme has improved the quality of education in schools and classrooms. The idea was good in theory but, in practice, it has not turned out as expected. There is no evidence that chartered teachers in schools have enhanced the quality of education. The impact on pupil outcomes is dubious. As I said, I would shed no tears over the removal of chartered teacher status.

Recommendation 21 covers adequately people who can and do make such an impact on a classroom and a school. It recommends asking the General Teaching Council for Scotland to put in place recognition of good practice,

"innovative classroom and collaborative practice or ... a successful history in mentoring".

All the aspects that can have an impact on outcomes for young people are covered in that recommendation. In theory, chartered teacher status looked as if it might provide something for the profession, but its impact in practice has been disappointing.

I largely agree with what Ann Ballinger said—Pam Nesbitt emphasised it—about how the career structure has contracted. The removal of leadership capacity in schools is causing a difficulty not just in the career structure but in running schools. Schools have a huge challenge, because local authorities seem to be cutting back on such capacity. Having 32 varieties of structure across the country is crazy. Why do we not start to consider how to run a national profession rather than have 32 varieties?

The job-sizing toolkit provides a huge disincentive to many people. The report recommends—although not in the section on career structure—that the toolkit should be examined. Substantial aspects of that toolkit provide a disincentive in relation to leadership and leadership capacity. There is a huge issue concerning pastoral care in secondary schools. A huge series of anomalies, which are not just minor, can be changed by tweaking the toolkit in relation to the responsibilities of heads, depute heads and principal teachers. If we start to look at a career structure that is fit for purpose, we must consider how the job-sizing toolkit disincentivises many aspects of the career structure.

Pam Nesbitt: I will pick up on two relevant recommendations. Recommendation 17 does not mention governance, but it brings into play governance and devolved school management. Drew Morrice and Jim Thewliss made the point about 32 local authorities meaning 32 different structures. If that is taken down to school level, thousands of structures could be in place. We would welcome a review of governance and autonomy for headteachers in schools but, as Jim Thewliss just said, we should be a national profession. We provide a national curriculum, but we do so in 32 ways with 32 versions of management capacity and leadership capacity and with different ways of delivering non-contact time, as we previously discussed. We need to start to look at that.

12:00

Another issue about moving posts, which in turn picks up on Jim Thewliss's point about job sizing, is that we could end up in a ping-pong situation if headteachers or principal teachers start moving to other schools. If they are job sized, how will that work if the arrangement is a flexible one, if it is merely for professional development or whatever? I endorse Jim's comments in that respect. Although there has been an attempt to address anomalies in the job-sizing system and to ensure consistency of approach, there has been no review of some of the systemic problems in the job-sizing toolkit and we would welcome an independent review of the matter.

Andrew Sutherland: It strikes me that we are discussing two parallel issues; first, whether the new structure for teacher progression is suitable and attractive enough; and secondly, whether it is the best mechanism for managing or leading a school. The answer to both questions might or might not be the same. In the late 1980s, when I was a principal teacher in a small rural school with a staff of 37, 27 members of staff were promoted. That might have been a positive move for those who wanted promotion, but one might argue that it might not have been the most efficient way of managing that school. It is important that we clarify the outcome that we are seeking.

The report refers to flexibility in the role of headteachers. Although I accept Drew Morrice's point about different ways of working in the 32 authorities, I should also set out the counter view, which is that a headteacher who leads in a collegial manner a school that sits at the centre of the community will, in association with the staff, know what is best for her or his establishment. If there is flexibility in, for example, the allocation of management points to that establishment, it might choose to run a different management model to that in another school. As someone whose substantive post is head of schools, I would not be against any headteacher who, after consultation and with the agreement of staff, wanted to put in place a system that was slightly different from that in a neighbouring school because of certain circumstances. The report recommends that such opportunities be available, but that is entirely a different question from whether the proposals are good for teachers' promotion prospects. As I said, we need to clarify that.

With regard to the chartered teacher scheme, I point out that, although there were very good chartered teachers, there were also very good staff who were not chartered teachers. I acknowledge Drew Morrice's points about what happened in the SNCT, of which I am a member, but I think that, with regard to the initial construction of the model, the pass had been sold early on. We should welcome the McCormac report's proposals for flexibility in the PT1 structure, which in the short or longer term gives those interested in seeking either temporary or permanent promotion a number of opportunities.

It all comes back to what we were saying in the earlier part of our conversation. The approach will need to be well-led and well-managed by schools and local authorities and despite the practical

challenges that we face with morale we can manage things effectively if we are all working towards the same end. The opportunities are in the report, convener, but the question is how we manage it.

John Stodter: An expert group could look at this part of the report in more detail. One of the original intentions of McCrone and "A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century" was to safeguard recruitment and retention. Scotland has been very successful in that respect but, depressingly, as many of us know—and as indeed many of us with partners or loved ones who are teachers know—the advice that teachers often give their own children or pupils is, "Don't go into teaching." There are enough straws in the wind to suggest that career progression, retention and recruitment should be examined in detail. No change has been proposed to the basic four-tier structure that exists across Scotland; given that that represents a reduction in what we had in the past, it is clear that there are fewer opportunities, particularly for secondary teachers, to go up the career ladder.

The report seems to be trying to link the old-fashioned idea of continuous professional development or training with the way in which people develop good practice in their jobs each and every day.

The review gives real opportunities for lifelong career development. In that context, it very much fits with Graham Donaldson's review, which is to say that, increasingly, curriculum development and developing good approaches in the classroom with colleagues and for pupils are meaningful professional development activities, and asks whether there is a way to reward that.

I spent the first 13 years of my career working south of the border. While I was there, they introduced a set of additional allowances. There were five levels—they could last for a year or two years and so on. They were useful for enabling a school to say, "We've got this big chunk of development work and we need someone to take it forward." The school could allocate the allowance for a year and it would stop after a year. I knew of a case in which two teachers went in together and said that they would share the allowance.

The review could allow for a different approach to continuing professional development that sees it as part of career structure and development. There is the idea of using teachers in a more mobile way. Thinking of teacher education and the universities, for example, I have always wondered why teachers are not used more and why universities and local authorities together do not employ a pool of staff to assist in teacher development, initial teacher education, shadowing, coaching and leadership development. There are big opportunities in the review if we can move away from the idea of training teachers and doing CPD as events, and towards the idea that those things are fundamental to a teacher's career.

The other issue is job size. Like most people here, probably, I think that if job size was looked at in some detail it might ease some of the perceived difficulties about lack of opportunities and lack of promoted posts and so on.

The Convener: Before we move on, I ask the union reps to comment on recommendations 17 and 18, which were touched on by a number of people. Recommendation 17 is:

> "Resources should be devolved to headteachers to determine the number and level of promoted posts".

I can see the flexibility and opportunities in that one, but I can also see the possibility of threats and difficulties. Recommendation 18 is:

> "The post of principal teacher should be more flexibly deployed by local authorities and schools; it should be possible to promote staff to these posts on a temporary basis."

That issue was raised earlier. I can see both sides of the argument there, too, but I want to hear the views of the trade union reps.

Drew Morrice: I made the point that there should be a degree of certainty across all councils about the number of promoted posts that would be required. I take Andrew Sutherland's point that there might be a degree of flexibility about whether it is actual posts or a notional allocation of points.

I understand John Stodter's point about temporary allowances if you have a dedicated budget. For example, when the budgets for "Better Behaviour—Better Learning" were devolved to schools, there was a clear need for a temporarily promoted member of staff to lead on that. It was linked to the allocated budget, which is different from the apparent absolute flexibility in recommendation 18. A specific purpose—a purpose that is approved and allocated by the council or by national Government—is different from devolving to head teachers on a flexible basis. If there is total flexibility, there is a clear risk of patronage.

The issue of the number and level of promoted posts goes back to an earlier point. There should not be a postcode lottery across Scotland. That is outdated, whether you set a structure or use a points system and dedicate the points. Schools of the same size should have similar structures in place. One of the real anomalies at present is the vast discrepancy between schools of the same size, which are trying to deliver the same educational ends with different levels of promoted posts in the structure.

Ann Ballinger: I agree entirely with everything that Drew Morrice said, which is quite an unusual event. If I may, I will turn to recommendation 18 first. If it relates to short-term-specific posts for a particular piece of work, we would welcome it as an opportunity for staff to develop their skills and for schools to use the available expertise in the education system, which would be extremely useful and valuable.

However—my "however" relates to how the recommendation is used—if it merely becomes a system for filling a vacant post by allowing one person to carry out the role for a year, followed by another for a year and somebody else for another year and the post is never advertised or filled properly, obviously we would consider that to be detrimental not only to the teachers involved but to the pupils. There needs to be a certain amount of certainty within a department—there were too many "certains" in that sentence. As a group of staff, you need to know where your department is going and how you are going to move forward next year, the year after that and the year after that. You cannot do that if your principal teacher's post is a lottery and just goes to the next person the headteacher likes. I am using a poor example—the worst possible scenario. There are a very few schools where that sort of situation already exists. We need to be very careful that where we are using flexibility, we are using it appropriately.

In many ways, devolving resources to headteachers is a good idea, although I am concerned about the number of variations in structure in different schools. Devolving resources has, however, implications for job sizing that headteachers might not be aware of. If I may be anecdotal for a moment, I will give you an example. I am working with a headteacher to try to solve a problem that he has. He moved points from one area into another—with the best of intentions, which were to help his school, which is in a difficult area, move forward—and then discovered that what he had done had an on-going effect on all the other staff, who found themselves being job-sized down the way and losing money. That poor guy is very distressed about the implications of that and he is determined that never again will he use flexibility. If we are to have the kind of system that is suggested, we must look at all the connections around it and ensure that we are aware of the implications of any move before it is made.

Alan Robertson: I seem to be in quite a strange position, because our school has implemented a lot of these recommendations. We have two PT1s on a 23-month secondment, which has been working for a couple of years now, and we are starting to find the difficulties with that. We are having to advertise throughout the region, which means that to fill a secondment we are having to find a surplus member of staff to move somewhere else. A lot of teachers are a bit up in arms about it, but, at the same time, they welcome the opportunity, because it is the only available opportunity for promotion—or experience of promotion—in secondary schools at the moment. We have a whole generation of teachers coming through for whom promotion has never been an option, because of the time when they came into schools and the time when they will be moving out. As long as everybody is conducting a similar programme in a similar way, there are possibilities, but if every school has a completely different system, there will possibly be very bad sides as well as good sides.

Jane Peckham: When we looked at the review, we were surprised that what we perceived to be deeply flawed practices from England and Wales were starting to creep in a wee bit here. Our experience has been that wherever flexibilities have been introduced, there have been such a wide range of practices that they have done very little to improve teaching and learning. We sound a note of caution about just how what is recommended would be intended to operate. I agree with what my colleagues have said, but I would add a word of caution around flexibility. If temporary principal teacher posts were introduced, we would have to ensure that they could not just be withdrawn on a whim, whether for budgetary or other reasons. Schools need a certain element of continuity to function and I would not want to see replaced the normal route through which principal teachers are engaged.

12:15

Pam Nesbitt: I will make a couple of comments. Drew Morrice mentioned different sizes of schools and I would like to mention the cross-sectoral difficulties of secondary schools that have promoted post structures. Jim Thewliss and I work just along the road from one another, but I work in a big primary school and there are secondary schools that are about the same size but have bigger management structures and that can have cross-sectoral difficulties.

I make a plea on behalf of headteachers. They are professionals, too, and they are tasked to make decisions about their school. It will be a shame if we go down the road of putting in a policy on headteacher autonomy because of the poor practice of some headteachers, rather than doing what we think is right. That is true across the board. You cannot always legislate for poor practice. Managers have to do something about it. It is about safeguards and how a situation is interpreted by headteachers. They are best placed to know the context of their school. They work in it

from day to day and they know the children, parents and staff that they are working with.

Ann Ballinger made a comment about posts not being filled—the flexible posts. That is happening now without that opportunity having been created. We are using temporary contracts or posts are not being filled because of budget constraints. Headteachers do not want a rolling programme of principal teachers either; they want something that they can use to develop learning and teaching and take them forward.

Someone made the point about job sizing. That is exactly the point that I was making earlier. There are grave problems in doing anything like what is proposed, because of the way that job sizing is carried out.

Jim Thewliss: I come back to the point that we are putting in place something that is there to sustain effective learning and teaching in the context of curriculum for excellence.

As we are developing curriculum for excellence, we are finding that we have a curriculum that is best fitted to the needs of particular schools. That provides the opportunity to produce a leadership and management structure in the school that can sustain and support what you are doing at school level.

To come back to Jane Peckham's point about the notion that you put something into place because money disappears, please bear it in mind that the proposals are set within the context of other reports. David Cameron's report recommended three-year budget planning. Do not take things out of the context of the other things that are out there.

I see this as an opportunity to allow the school to respond to the needs that are raised when you start to look at the discussions that the curriculum for excellence brings to the fore within the curriculum for planning. It certainly gives me an opportunity, as a headteacher, to say, "Okay, I can now respond to what we have derived from staff discussion. Here is the leadership capacity to deliver that." It gives me that flexibility.

I come back to Andrew Sutherland's point about the notion of core staffing based on some sort of points structure. That allows me to make the staffing structure flexible enough to meet the needs of the curriculum that I will put in place. It is an ideal way forward for me, looking at what I want the curriculum and the learning and teaching experience to be three, four or five years hence. It produces a planning structure that enables me to say, "Okay, the actions that we take now will not be cut off because funding is removed, or because I do not have the expertise there." I can plan for that over a longer period of time, which I currently cannot do because I do not have that flexibility.

The Convener: Thank you very much, everybody. Time is getting on and I want to move us on a little bit. Liam McArthur has a question, although I do not know whether it is a question on this point or whether he wants to move us on.

Liam McArthur: I am conscious that everybody has referred to the question that I was going to ask as they have responded to other questions, particularly around the backdrop against which issues of flexibility are being viewed.

Clearly, the McCormac review refers to an unfortunate but inevitable trade-off, as he sees it, between teacher numbers and teacher quality. Paragraph 1.18 states:

> "Improving teacher quality and enhancing the sense of professional purpose in teaching is a better indicator of improved outcomes for children and young people"

than maintaining a low pupil to teacher ratio. It would be useful for the committee to get witnesses' observations on the impact that that is likely to have, in particular, on outcomes for pupils.

Andrew Sutherland: If I may say so, that is perhaps not one of the best-worded sections of the report. To me, it is not a case of one or t'other. We have in place legislation on maximum class sizes, which are 25 in P1, 30 in P2 and P3, 33 in P4 to P7 and the same in secondary school. As local authority employers, we would always work to those class sizes and, when we can work towards a class size of 18, we will try to do so as well as we can.

However, that should not be done at the expense of teacher quality, because teacher quality has to come anyway. The Donaldson report makes it very clear—as, indeed, does all the international research—that what makes the biggest difference to outcomes for our young people is the delivery in classrooms, by highly trained, well-supported teachers, of high-quality learning and teaching. There is no doubt about that. The bit about improving teacher quality should be a sentence on its own. I do not think that the two issues should have been joined together.

John Stodter: We addressed that specifically when we spoke to Professor McCormac and his team. Given that education budgets will be reduced significantly in the years to come, we find it difficult to see how we can continue to employ the number of teachers that we currently employ and save millions and millions of pounds. That just does not square. Our plea on Government policy has been that we should not set off with the idea that we will improve quality and that we will do so by reducing teacher numbers, because those are not necessarily the same thing.

The last sentence in the paragraph to which you referred is the important one. It says that

"the existing pupil teacher ratio should be maintained,"

but that any further small reductions in class size that might be possible in the medium term

"should not be pursued at the expense of raising ... quality."

That is the important point. Like Andrew Sutherland, I think that it was not good phrasing to use the word "trade-off", as it suggested that some kind of financial deal was being done.

The Convener: That that was not the best choice of words is something that I hope we can agree on.

Pam Nesbitt: The issue links in with the class-size debate. We do not agree that having a definitive maximum class size will necessarily improve the quality of education for children or be fit for purpose in every school, which goes back to the issue of context.

We have said to various stakeholders on a number of occasions that staffing standards need to be looked at. Instead of having a class-size debate, we need to consider whether schools are staffed appropriately to deliver the necessary quality of education and to give headteachers, schools and local authorities the autonomy to best meet the needs of the pupils in the context that they are in. If arrangements are correct, if staffing standards are right and if the necessary budgets are there—that is a crucial point—to allow that to happen, headteachers should do what best fits the context in their school and use the staff that they have to best meet needs. That could mean—to be anecdotal for a second—that one class has 30 pupils in it, while another has 18 in it, because of the needs of the children in that class, instead of all classes having to be the same size.

The Convener: As we are being anecdotal, the norm in the secondary school that I went to was that the pupils with greater needs were in smaller classes. It was a big secondary, so flexibility existed to allow that. Are you saying that we have lost that flexibility over the past few years?

Pam Nesbitt: I think that, by specifying a maximum class size, we have lost that flexibility.

Drew Morrice: I do not agree with that at all. In setting a maximum class size, we create a ceiling beyond which a class would be dysfunctional. I do not think that there is anything wrong with that. I think that teachers require a degree of certainty around the number of pupils that they will have because that is part of managing the class and the workload and taking things forward.

I accept Pam Nesbitt's point about staffing standards bringing greater certainty but, just as Andrew Sutherland was quite correct to say that teacher numbers and teacher quality should not be seen as an either/or, staffing standards and class sizes should not be seen as an either/or. A maximum class size can provide a context within an overall staffing standard, and that is the best way to approach it.

Ann Ballinger: I am in an awkward position, because I agree with both Pam Nesbitt and Drew Morrice.

The Convener: I am not sure that that is possible.

Ann Ballinger: I agree that there must be a maximum class size. I do not think that any of us would want to go back to the situation in the 1950s in which there were 50 or 60 pupils sitting and staring at the teacher in the distance—not that any of us could possibly remember that far back, of course.

However, a rigid structure of class sizes means that the maximum also becomes the minimum. The flexibility that I hope still exists in schools to enable poorer pupils to be taught in very small classes, so that they can get almost one-to-one attention for part of the period, would disappear. A group of six or eight very poor pupils would be just about manageable for a period, but if they were taught in a class of 30, their learning and that of all the other pupils in the class would disappear. Such a situation would be hugely detrimental to the learning of every pupil who ends up in a class with those other pupils.

It is very important, whatever we do, that the key is improving learning and teaching.

George Jamieson: I agree 100 per cent with Ann Ballinger's comment about a small number of children disrupting the whole class, and I also agree with Pam Nesbitt's comment that the ability of the teacher and the abilities of the pupils are important. However, there should be a long-term aspiration to reduce class sizes, because that is good for teachers and for children. We are facing budgetary constraints just now, but we should not use that as an excuse not to aspire to smaller class sizes.

One issue that preys on parents' minds is what we call "Johnny Average": the wee kiddie who sits there quietly and gets on with his work. If we have large class sizes, those kids do not get the support or encouragement that they require because it is difficult for teachers to give them attention. We must aspire, within budgetary constraints, to put in front of classes the best teachers, relative to that challenge.

Ann Ballinger's point is fundamentally correct: it takes just one or two children to upset a whole class, which makes the class difficult to manage. We are all in agreement here, but we must aspire eventually to reduce class sizes so that it is easier for teachers to interrelate with all children. It is

easy to be pragmatic and leave alone the kids who do not bother you; that is just human nature. Management must not fall into being pragmatic with that flexibility just in order to cover the bases. That is always a danger, because they have to manage their school.

Jim Thewliss: I want to emphasise one or two points that have been made. There is a difference between a maximum class size and a staffing standard, and headteachers must be given the opportunity to operate within a staffing standard. For example, my school takes 220 pupils in first year, and they must be in English classes of no more than 20. We therefore have 11 sections of 20, which is not—as Ann Ballinger said—the best learning environment for all those youngsters.

We must give headteachers the flexibility to say that they will meet the needs of young people, as opposed to being held to something that says that every class must have 20 pupils because that is the maximum class size. For 20 youngsters who are coming into a large secondary school, all of whom are within the five-to-14 curriculum and are at reading levels A and B, that is not the best learning environment. There must be flexibility within a staffing standard. Headteachers must be allowed to meet the needs of the young people who are coming through the doors of their schools.

The Convener: I hear what you are saying, but how does one effectively balance the need for flexibility that you have just described with the fear that it will result in a poorer outcome for some pupils? If we do not have that ceiling or barrier, there will be a tendency for class sizes to rise in certain areas. Even if the approach is used partly to offset other class sizes in a school, there is a fear that there might be a tendency to use it to offset difficulties with the budget.

12:30

Jim Thewliss: What we do happens through discussion with the principal teachers of English and maths. There is a maximum class size of 33 in S1 for those subjects. We never get anywhere near the maximum in S1, but we certainly do not have a situation in which every class has 20 pupils. For a great many kids it would be inappropriate to be in a class of 20.

Eileen Prior: A lot of good sense has been spoken around the table. I suspect that much smoke but not much light is generated around class sizes. The research that I have looked at concludes that tweaking class sizes—by knocking two off, for example—does not make a substantial difference to young people's learning outcomes.

It has to come down to common sense at school level about pupils' needs. Headteachers and teachers have to ask, "What is happening in our school and our classes? Where do we put our resource?" We all recognise that we do not have limitless resource, so it must be horses for courses.

The Convener: Clare Adamson will ask the final question. Given the time, I invite witnesses, when they respond, to wrap up by summarising the main points that the committee needs to address and, in particular, that we need to ask Professor McCormac about next week.

Clare Adamson: Pam Nesbitt said that it is hard to see the wood for the trees, given that so much is going on. We have had curriculum for excellence, the Donaldson report and the McCormac review. There was also the review of devolved school management, which considered greater devolution of school budgets to school heads. Is the approach coherent? Are there areas that should be reformed, but which have fallen through the cracks? How do we move forward?

Andrew Sutherland: It goes without saying that there has been a lot of work. Each report is valid and interesting and answers key questions. When I was on the train, I was wondering whether there is something missing that we are not picking up, but I do not think that there is. What is required is time for reflection. I know that we are under a lot of pressure and that time is of the essence, but there is time for reflection on the part of employers, unions and staff to enable us to benchmark the reports against the fundamental questions. We have done that this morning.

We live in a more challenging world and it is essential that every young person in our society gets the best possible outcome, irrespective of need. If that is the core benchmark against which we measure everything that we do, we can ask whether we have enough in place to make such a guarantee. At present, I fear that we do not. However, what is missing is not a report but a consensus and clear vision on where we want to go, because that has been muddied by various issues, which have arisen at certain times—as is understandable.

If we turn full circle and consider what curriculum for excellence was meant to achieve, we can see that there was an understanding of the vision for, and values of, Scottish education. If we can benchmark all the reports against the outcomes that I described, while thinking about the core principles of curriculum for excellence, we will have enough to work with and all elements will support what we do. What I am saying—in a long-winded way—is that the infrastructure is there and we know what we need to achieve, but we must be careful not to get caught in side streets that reports take us down. If recommendations do not improve outcomes and deliver curriculum for

excellence, we should not waste too much time on them.

John Stodter: I would have said everything that Andrew Sutherland said, so I do not need to say it. However, it is probably a mistake to ask people to say what they would change, because there are probably things that need to be changed, if we take a step back.

What has always puzzled me is the learner journey from the age of three all the way through to an honours degree at university. If you see it as a whole package, it is a bit swings and roundabouts. To take the issue that we have just looked at, which is class sizes, we start off with 15 in nursery, move to 18 in early primary, to 33 for the rest of primary school, then down to 20 for practical classes in secondary. Some authorities and schools can still afford to have 20 for English and maths, but for the other classes it is 33 in early secondary. For standard grade, the number goes down to maybe 20 or less. In S6, there could be classes as small as six, seven or eight. However, a year 1 class in university could have 300.

Because of the way in which the system has been tackled in chunks, there is a lack of a coherent journey. I also believe that there are also probably too many years in that journey. It is odd that most children in S6 already have the qualifications that they need to take up a university place but then spend a further four years at university; whereas in other countries they do the same degree in fewer years. If there is an efficiency to be had, I am sure that it is that a lot of youngsters could probably get there at least a year earlier.

There also seem to be fewer avenues and opportunities on that journey for vocational and practical education. For a long time in Scotland, we have taken the slightly elitist view that vocational education—and choosing it—was a bad thing and that it should be kept to the very end of the journey when someone is 18. Other countries, such as Germany and those in Scandinavia, find that a strange approach. We know that there are good careers and lives to be made out of practical and vocational education and doing stuff. If there is one area in Scottish education that we still undervalue, it is the "doing stuff" bit.

The focus of the McCormac report and all such reports is the idea of outcomes, but we are still not good at measuring them and we still do not have a clear view of them. Ultimately, teachers want to know how they will be judged and what measure will be used. We need to ensure that we have a clear, agreed, consistent, simple and coherent idea of what the outcomes are and how we will judge education. Should we have a slightly artificial, external paper-and-pencil test that compares us with other countries and says "Well, you're not doing very well at this test compared to those other countries", or are we really going to take curriculum for excellence and say "Well, this enables children to be independent people," and find a way of trying to benchmark or measure that, as Andrew Sutherland said?

The challenge is to keep track of all the different initiatives. McCrone, for example, ran out of steam after three or four years. Some of the negotiations were very detailed and tiresome so that people forgot, for example, why the chartered teacher post was instigated in the first place, and the process kind of lost its purpose along the way.

It seems to me, though, that all the strategies consistently face in the right direction. It is now about measuring outcomes and ensuring that we follow that through to its conclusion.

Pam Nesbitt: It is about seeing the joined-up thinking, as John Stodter said, because—I believe—all the reviews work together. We have listened to presentations for many reviews and many of us have been involved in groups for GTCS professional updates with the Donaldson report, devolved school management governance and the McCormac report, for example. We go to them and think "Oh, yeah—heard that before," because although something might appear under a different heading, it is doing the same thing.

To use a very primary term, it is now time for a cross-curricular approach to pick out all the things that match, and for somebody to take that forward, negotiate and come up with an implementation project. However, we must be mindful of the current climate and of our teachers back at the chalkface who do not hear as much of this debate as we sitting here probably do, and who are maybe not fully aware of all the thinking behind it. I know that all the reports are on the web, but teachers have 35 hours of continuing professional development time and they do not want to use it all reading review reports.

The impact must be on learning and teaching, and the outcome for pupils must come first. I urge whoever will implement bits of the review to look seriously at flexibility and how it can be managed. Part of that will involve ensuring that appropriate safeguards are in place. Some of the interpretations will have to be more detailed, so that we can understand what Professor McCormac means by some of the recommendations. Sometimes, we are not sure why a recommendation reads as it does, so we need a bit more information on that.

We can look for opportunities in the process and there is a chance to bring everything together. This is an exciting, but challenging, time. There are real opportunities for the profession if we can

see the crossover and allow time for discussion so that measures are not implemented in a short timescale. People should have time to think about the proposals and take them forward appropriately.

Jim Thewliss: I will try not to repeat what my colleagues have said, but I have one or two points to bring into the conversation. We are here to discuss the McCormac review, but it is important that we do not see it in isolation or fall into the danger of cherry picking from it. We must see it in the context of other reports, not least the Donaldson and Cameron reports, and of where we are with curriculum for excellence. Anything that we do must support the work that has already been done on that and should develop CFE in a way that allows it to be of greatest benefit to young people in schools. Some young people in secondary school are now into the second year of curriculum for excellence. We have an obligation to them to use the review that we have been discussing and those other reports to sustain, support and develop the education experience that they will have.

I recognise entirely the tensions that exist. McCrone has reached the end of its shelf life and there are tensions in relation to budget cuts, which it would be foolish to ignore in any decisions that we take. However, we have moved on significantly in the past 10 years since McCrone first saw the light of day. We operate in a system in which there is increased confidence, trust and collegiality in the profession—although, again, I fully recognise the tensions that exist. We operate in a climate in which much more effective learning and teaching are taking place than were happening 10 years ago. That is based on increasing professionalisation of the teacher base and increased support to allow them to become professionals. That is recognised in a great deal of what McCormac has said.

The McCormac report is based on recognising good practice and developing, promoting and expanding it. I certainly see the value of the flexibility that McCormac offers in taking forward that good practice and building on the trust and collegiality that are already in the system. The report offers a huge number of opportunities to enable schools to develop flexibly in response to the challenges out there in the world and the challenges that we meet day to day in putting in place curriculum for excellence.

The report has 34 recommendations. In going through them one by one, our touchstone must be the whether each one has the potential to improve outcomes for young people. That is what McCormac has based everything on, so if we are to test the report, that is how to do it.

The report sits with other high-profile reports in providing us with the opportunity—if we can pick our way through it, identify where we want to go and give ourselves a long-term view of where it will take us—to put in place a coherent learning journey for young people in the context of curriculum for excellence. To my mind, there is more in the report to recommend it than otherwise.

George Jamieson: There is not much left to say. I will try to stick to a purely parental view. For those who are not aware of it, the National Parent Forum of Scotland kicked off about two and a half years ago and has 32 members representing the 32 local authorities, each of whom is a school council member who has children. Our pure and simple objective is to improve outcomes for children—all children in Scotland and each individual child. We talk about how we judge outcomes: it is incredibly difficult to do. Not many folk get six As or fail everything. We need to treat every child as an individual and allow them the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Curriculum for excellence provides many opportunities to do that if we all engage in it and buy into it.

12:45

Much of the McCormac review reflects our inputs, although other people must have backed those inputs. We would not disagree with any of the recommendations, although we support some more than others. However, the report is positive and it looks forward, which is what we need to do. Obviously, to get good outcomes for children, we need motivated and able teachers. We would be up for that.

The one thing that is missing from the report and the Donaldson report—it seems to have slipped through the net, or perhaps it is just implicit—is the importance of parental involvement. You might say that I would say that, but there is a huge amount of evidence that the opportunities of children whose parents become involved in their education are massively improved. A lot of children do not get that support, and we are all about trying to get more parental involvement in education and ensuring that individual parents have time with teachers and school councils and have greater influence. In the experience of the members of the National Parent Forum, there is huge variation in levels of engagement between school councils, headteachers, teachers and parents. We want to bridge that and to build trust so that parents can be involved in a collaborative and positive manner. That is not happening as it should be at the moment.

Parental involvement with the teacher and the headteacher is a bit of a lottery. I will share an anecdote: I had to be fit when I went to my boy's

S1 parent night in order to get the five minutes that had been allocated to me with each teacher. It was disgraceful. Parents were pushing other parents aside to get to the teacher. I am making light of it, but it was absolutely shocking. I am interested in education and in the education of my children, but some parents would not bother. There needs to be more effort on the part of teachers and headteachers to get parents more involved with schools. Parents and school councils need to engage more positively with each other so that we can maximise that resource.

The Convener: I do not want to curtail anyone's comments, but some of us have to go to another committee meeting soon, so I ask everyone to be as brief as possible.

Eileen Prior: Again, George Jamieson has stolen my thunder.

Another report that was published this year, but which has not been mentioned so far, is David Cameron's report on the school handbook and parental involvement. It deserves proper consideration because it talks about where the issues are around greater parental involvement. The issue is not the school handbook—that is the least of it—but about having a culture within schools that welcomes parents and sees them as having a valid contribution to make to the education of their children.

Drew Morrice: I will make three brief points. There has been a lot of talk about McCrone but, in fact, the programme that was set out in "A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century" was a tripartite agreement that was reached between Government, teaching unions and employers. That set the context. One of the most important factors with regard to what happens next is not what Professor McCormac says should happen next but what the parties to that agreement take forward in a tripartite way.

The Cameron and Donaldson reports have been mentioned, as has the issue of professional accreditation and the GTCS. However, I think that the most critical issue that will impact on schools will be the comprehensive spending review. That will have far more impact than the McCormac recommendations. I wish members the best in your deliberations—tomorrow, I think—on that matter.

I have some sympathy for Professor McCormac because everyone else who has been asked to consider teachers' conditions of service has been given a bag of money with which to oil the wheels of change; he has not.

I recognise the sentiments about the need to move forward constructively, but I am speaking on behalf of teachers who feel increasingly beleaguered. They are looking at a massive assault on their pension rights and feel themselves to be—like the rest of the public sector—under attack. The challenge is to try to balance the need to take teachers forward at a time when the very fabric of their working life is under attack. I do not know how we will do that.

Ann Ballinger: Again, I completely agree with Drew Morrice, so I will not make any of the points that he made—

The Convener: That is twice, Ann.

Ann Ballinger: Indeed. I would make a plea that there be no more reports, investigations or initiatives. We need time. We need to stop and reflect on the changes that are taking place in Scottish education, and we need to give them time to bed in. We need to see what effect those changes have in a few years and we need to draw breath before we do anything else.

All the reports that have been mentioned agree that our most valuable resource is our teachers, but they are increasingly feeling isolated and their confidence is dropping because of the media onslaught against them. Pressure as a result of the spending review is inevitable, but the media onslaught against teachers at the moment is breathtaking. Even at this early stage in the term, we are finding teachers who are almost at the end of their tethers—goodness knows what they are going to be like by June. Workload concerns have to be addressed and teachers have to be valued before any teaching and learning can take place.

Alan Robertson: I agree with most of what has been said. Jim Thewliss talked about the individual recommendations. We have talked about them in a generic way, but our concern is that jobs are at risk—they might not be teachers' jobs, but a lot of our members are not teachers but support assistants and others who work in schools. The recommendations could quite easily cost a lot of jobs.

On the aspects of education that are still in need of reform, the main one is funding. We are talking about 21st century education, but we are using 20th century resources in 19th century buildings. We cannot go on like that. I agree that the issue of teachers' salaries and so on must be addressed, but we really need the resources around the teachers if we are to continue to make the progress that we have been making over the past 10 years.

Jane Peckham: Obviously, I would echo everything that my teaching union colleagues have said. We made no secret of our opposition to the timing of the review because, at this time, it cannot be anything other than financially driven. We need to stop all the initiatives coming out.

Teachers are extremely dedicated professionals. They do not have a cushy number; they have a very difficult job. Their confidence and morale are very low. In our view, if you get things right for teachers you will get things right for Scottish education and for the outcomes of the children.

The Convener: I thank everyone for giving so much of their time to come here today—some of you might be local, but others have travelled from further afield. Your evidence has been appreciated by all of us and will help us to consider this important area and question Professor McCormac with a bit more expert knowledge than we had earlier this morning.

Meeting closed at 12:53.

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