



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus **The Public Accounts Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 21 Ionawr 2014
Tuesday, 21 January 2014

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Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod Motion
under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir
trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are recorded in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In
addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol **Committee members in attendance**

Mohammad Asghar

Ceidwadwyr Cymreig
Welsh Conservatives

Jocelyn Davies	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Mike Hedges	Llafur Labour
Sandy Mewies	Llafur Labour
Darren Millar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)
Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

**Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance**

Owen Evans	Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol, Adran Addysg a Sgiliau, Llywodraeth Cymru Director General, Education and Skills, Welsh Government
Claire Flood-Page	Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru Wales Audit Office
Phil Jones	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr yr Is-adran Safonau Ymarferwyr a Datblygu Proffesiynol, Llywodraeth Cymru Deputy Director, Practitioner Standards & Professional Development, Welsh Government
Dr Brett Pugh	Cyfarwyddwr y Grŵp Safonau a Gweithlu Ysgolion, Llywodraeth Cymru Group Director, School Standards & Workforce Group, Welsh Government
Huw Vaughan Thomas	Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru Auditor General for Wales

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Claire Griffiths	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Joanest Jackson	Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol Senior Legal Adviser
Meriel Singleton	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:00.
The meeting began at 09:00.*

**Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Darren Millar:** Good morning, everybody, and welcome to today's meeting of the Public Accounts Committee. I encourage everybody to switch off their BlackBerrys, mobile phones and pagers, because, of course, they can interfere with the broadcasting and sound equipment. For those who require it, translation is available through the headsets on channel 1 and amplification on channel 0. Of course, we encourage Members to use either English or

Welsh as they see fit—and, indeed, witnesses—given that the Assembly is a bilingual institution. There is no fire alarm planned, so we should follow the instructions of the ushers if the alarm sounds. We have not received any apologies today, but I am advised that this may be Jocelyn Davies’s last meeting of this committee for a while. I am sure that all Members would want to extend their thanks to Jocelyn for the support that she has given the committee over the years. We look forward to working with her replacement, once ratified by the National Assembly later today, who I understand will be Alun Ffred Jones.

[2] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes, it will be Alun Ffred Jones, but I will be back, Chair.

[3] **Darren Millar:** I am sure you will. It is great to see you.

[4] **Sandy Mewies:** Is that a threat, or a promise? [*Laughter.*]

[5] **Mike Hedges:** It took MacArthur three years to fulfil that promise. [*Laughter.*]

[6] **Darren Millar:** We have not received any apologies for absence today.

09:01

**Trefniadau Cyflenwi ar gyfer Absenoldeb Athrawon: Tystiolaeth gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Covering Teachers’ Absence: Evidence from the Welsh Government**

[7] **Darren Millar:** I am very pleased to be able to welcome Owen Evans, the director general of education and skills, to the table today, along with Dr Brett Pugh, the group director of the school standards and workforce group, and Phil Jones, the deputy director of practitioner standards and professional development. Members have received a copy of the report that was published on 17 September by the Wales Audit Office and, indeed, the written response that you have provided to us, along with some copies of letters from the Welsh Local Government Association as well, which set out its position on the Auditor General for Wales’s report. Do you want to make any opening remarks before we move to the questions, Mr Evans?

[8] **Mr Evans:** Perhaps I could make the point that the Welsh Government was concerned about the quality of provision and the arrangements for covering teachers’ absence, which is why we asked Estyn and the Wales Audit Office to investigate this area. Therefore, we welcome both papers, as they give us, probably, the facts behind many of the suspicions that we had about the performance of the system. As part of the entire school improvement plan, the most effective use of supply teachers is an important facet of that. So, this is an area in which we are addressing concerns, and the findings, as I said, probably mirror what we suspected. We have a number of plans in place at the moment that will be seeking to address the shortcomings. The biggest thing that we will hopefully be able to give more detail about today relates to the way in which, in the meantime between our providing evidence and now, we are firming up a lot of the dates and exactly what the provision we are looking to implement will look like.

[9] **Darren Millar:** Obviously, this report was published in September. You mentioned that you have been firming up some dates; it has been some time now, but there is very little in terms of timescale for some of the work that you have indicated you want to take forward in the paper that you provided to us. Can you give information on dates today, or is that something that you will have to send to us?

[10] **Mr Evans:** Hopefully, I will be able to give you dates today. It may be a month—

August, or February and so on—but we will be able to point to fairly definitive timescales for implementation.

[11] **Darren Millar:** Okay, that is very helpful indeed. The auditor general's report points out that as many as 10% of lessons generally across Wales have some sort of supply cover covering them because of absences. Why is the level so high? Do you believe that it is inevitable that it will always be around that sort of level, simply because of the pressures on teachers in the classroom in Wales—the training requirements et cetera? Some of those absences are unavoidable, are they not?

[12] **Mr Evans:** They are. Perhaps I can say a few words and then I will bring Brett in, as he is a former teacher and probably understands more of the day-to-day activity of schools. The first thing is that there is inevitability about the fact that we will have a requirement for supply teachers. The workload agreement and the 'rarely cover' provisions, mean that, even on a day-to-day basis, just through Welsh Government interventions, we would expect some supply cover to be needed. Of course, you will always get sickness absence within, but that is not to say that we are not looking at some of the findings around the actual levels of sickness absence, particularly how it was monitored and how effective our control of it is. If you drill down to the bit that is almost out of our control but which we should be looking at, which is the actual sickness element, it is higher than England. That will be a concern for us as policy makers, and I am sure that it is a concern for the local authorities as well. However, what we see—and looking at the WAO's own charts—is that there is quite a significant discrepancy between the best performing councils and the poorest performing ones. Whereas the best performing councils are under the average that England would post, some of the poorest performing ones are quite significantly over.

[13] Within that, there are a couple of things. The first bit is that, obviously, it is possible to bring down sickness absence through careful management, and we will be looking to share some of the better practice from areas such as Ceredigion with some of the local authorities where there is poorer provision. This is not something new, of course, to Welsh education. We are looking right across the board at the moment, where there are quite large variances in the types of performance levels that we are seeing from some local authorities versus others.

[14] There is a slight correlation between educational performance for a local authority and sickness absence levels, but it is not that strong. Therefore, we are looking at providing better guidance in several ways. The first will be through the consortia, where we agreed the national model at the tail-end of last year, and that will be operative on 1 April, or 2 April—I do not want to pick April Fool's Day. There will be specific HR advice available across the consortia areas to try to improve that situation, but we will also be issuing new guidance. Although there is quite a significant amount of guidance already out there on the management of absences, and even though we can put all the guidance that we like out, what we face quite often is the issue of how much traction that actually gets within the school.

[15] Therefore, we are doing some fairly robust things to make sure that it actually does track through into the classroom. One is that we will be changing the regulations around the school development plans—what we will require from them. However, there is also the fact that, when we change the regulations—and I think that this has been brought up by some of the committee members—we will be requiring, for example, headteachers to report to governors on school absence. The final plank in trying to make sure that the situation is managed better—and I am sure that we will be discussing elements of this in more detail—will be about the way that we are working with Estyn at the moment to ensure that its inspection framework actually does peer into how effective the use of cover by supply teachers is.

[16] **Darren Millar:** We will go into a lot of this territory in more detail as we take

Members' questions. Brett, did you want to say anything before we move on?

[17] **Dr Pugh:** Yes. I think that an important element of this work centres very much around not just the sickness absence, but the element of training and CPD for teachers, and to be able to look at that at three levels. It really is important to look at it at those three levels, namely the perspective of Welsh Government, the perspective of the local authorities and the consortia, and then within schools, so that we look at all the possible methods of carrying out professional development and that we learn from the best methods that are most effective, and then actually carry out an assessment. Therefore, at each level, we are asking people to carry out an assessment. So, for the Welsh Government, from this point onwards—in fact, it is already in operation—we are asking all programme developers and leaders to put in that they have assessed the form of delivery and that they have looked at it in terms of the cost benefits. There will be some courses that will involve having teachers out of the classroom, and there can be clear benefits, but there will be others where we should be looking at other methods.

[18] **Darren Millar:** We will talk about those in a little more detail, so you will be able to put a bit more flesh on the bones in a few moments. I believe that you have a supplementary question, Mike.

[19] **Mike Hedges:** Yes. Why do you think headteachers do not report teacher absences to school governing bodies? I speak as the chair of two governing bodies where they are reported.

[20] **Mr Evans:** I will turn to Brett in a second. One element is that headteachers would tend to react to their own experiences. The other element is that they would tend to react to the regulatory framework and what they are expected to do. The strength of understanding of what is good practice, probably, has not been established fully enough across all headteachers. The best headteachers would report to their governors as a matter of course, although I am sure that we could meet a significant number of governors who have not seen a report. I think that that has been raised by committee members. So, one of the aspects of trying to ensure that this happens, through the regulations that we are consulting on over this summer, is that there would be an expectation on all headteachers to report to their governors on absence levels. The fact that Estyn is looking at it through the inspection framework tends to concentrate minds on what they will be reporting to the governors. I do not know whether Brett wants to say anything more.

[21] **Mr Pugh:** I just want to respond very briefly. To tie in with that, there is the requirement from the Robert Hill report for specialist HR officers within each consortium to support this work. Certainly, if I think back to my previous job in Newport, one of the studies mentioned in the audit office report was about Newport, where training was given for clusters of schools so that they could see with great clarity how they could follow this process through.

[22] **Mr Evans:** I would like to add that one of the points that we are always seeking to improve is, of course, the availability of data across schools. If we can establish a clear pattern for the publication of data, aggregated at local authority level in a more comprehensive fashion, when there is scrutiny of schools on a competitive basis, then there will be more of an onus on headteachers to report on it.

[23] **Darren Millar:** We now have a brief follow-up question on that from Aled.

[24] **Aled Roberts:** Rydych chi wedi sôn **Aled Roberts:** You have mentioned a couple of times improving human resources systems and making them a part of the consortia activities. In my experience, human resources
unwaith neu ddwy am wella cyfundrefnau
adnoddau dynol a'u gwneud yn rhan o
weithgaredd y consortia. Yn fy mhrofiad i,

mae adnoddau dynol o fewn llywodraeth leol yn eithaf gwan, felly, pa fath o gyflenwi sy'n mynd i fod o ran y consortia hyn? Os mai dim ond un person sy'n gyfrifol ym mhob cyngor, nid yw hynny'n mynd i wella'r sefyllfa.

in local government is quite weak, therefore, what kind of supply will there be in terms of these consortia? If there is just one person responsible for it in every authority, then that is not going to improve the situation.

[25] **Mr Evans:** Dof â Brett i mewn i'r drafodaeth mewn eiliad. Un o'r problemau sydd gennym ar y funud—rwy'n credu dy fod yn hollol iawn—yw'r ffaith bod awdurdodau lleol dros y blynyddoedd wedi symud i fodel lle mae'r cymorth adnoddau dynol sydd ar gael yn *generic* iawn. Nid oes ganddo unrhyw fath o *expertise* ym myd addysg ei hun ac, felly, nid yw wedi bod o lawer o help i'r ysgolion eu hunain. Un o'r pethau rydym yn ei wneud drwy'r consortia—mae hyn yn digwydd yn barod ac rydym yn edrych ar sut i weithredu hyn ledled Cymru—yw cael cymorth adnoddau dynol gydag arbenigedd fel y gellir rhoi'r arbenigedd hwnnw i ysgolion, achos rwy'n credu bod hynny wedi bod yn wan yn y blynyddoedd diweddar. Nid wyf yn siŵr a yw Brett am ddweud rhywbeth am hyn.

Mr Evans: I will bring Brett into the discussion in a moment. One of the problems that we have at the moment—I think that you are quite right—is the fact that, over the years, local authorities have moved to a model where the human resources support available is very generic. It does not have any sort of expertise in education itself and, therefore, has not been of much help to the schools themselves. One of the things that we are doing through the consortia—this is happening already and we are looking at how to implement this across Wales—is that we have sought expert human resources support so that expertise can then be provided to schools, because I think that has been weak in recent years. I am not sure whether Brett wants to come in here.

[26] **Mr Pugh:** That has been very much the case. There has been, in brief, a history whereby authorities have tended to centralise their HR support. So, the experts that they have are really experts very often on local government terms and conditions. Teachers' terms and conditions are very different. Therefore, the advice given to headteachers, we are told, has been much worse in some cases than in others. Therefore, the need for uniform advice by people that really understand teachers' terms and conditions has been made clear from the Robert Hill report. As an ex-headteacher and ex-director of education, I would say that it is very important to have that. Where that happens, you can then have training sessions, as I was alluding to earlier, across the whole authority and the whole consortium so that people know where the trip points are in terms of teachers' absence, how they should report it and how they should take the right steps to deal with it. I think that taking the right steps is the important thing and what needs the expertise and advice.

[27] **Darren Millar:** Jenny, I know that you want to come in. Is it on this particular issue?

[28] **Jenny Rathbone:** Yes.

[29] **Darren Millar:** Okay, very briefly.

[30] **Jenny Rathbone:** I do not discount the merits of your argument, but I am still struggling to understand why anybody with any HR experience would not be able to question whether somebody who was replacing somebody on long-term sick was or was not suitable through a discussion with the headteacher, because it is the headteacher who has the expertise. The HR person can ask, 'Is this person going to be fit for purpose for the length of time that we think this person is going to be absent?' I am really struggling to understand why ordinary HR people have not been able to do that.

09:15

[31] **Dr Pugh:** I think that there are two issues here. What I was alluding to is the situation of dealing with the sickness of permanent teachers.

[32] **Jenny Rathbone:** Yes.

[33] **Dr Pugh:** In terms of the quality of what is going on in the classroom with the substitute teacher, you are absolutely right; it should be addressed by the headteacher in the school, as part of their usual monitoring and then taken up.

[34] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, dealing with the sickness of a teacher and whether their absence is appropriate is part of a standard job description of any HR person, regardless of whether they know anything about education.

[35] **Dr Pugh:** I think that the reality has been that some of the expertise has not been there in terms of teachers' terms and conditions.

[36] **Mr Evans:** We also have to face the fact that this is one of the issues that was brought up in both reports. The monitoring of supply teachers in the classroom has not been strong enough. It has been our suspicion—and I think that there is some evidence in both reports—that, typically, what headteachers will be monitoring is whether a classroom is being kept quiet. There has been insufficient focus on how much educational progress those learners have made. With Estyn including the effectiveness of provision of cover in its inspection framework, starting in 2016-17, that will concentrate minds quite significantly. However, as well as bringing the cosh to play, so to speak, we will be providing support in the form of the guidelines.

[37] **Darren Millar:** We will come on to some of these issues in much more detail in a few moments, but, Sandy, you wanted to follow that up very quickly.

[38] **Sandy Mewies:** Yes. Your question was very general. Why do you think it has taken so long for people to realise—and I include local education authorities in this who have been guilty in the past of pulling headteachers out of schools for considerable lengths of time on secondment—that, whatever you say about the correlation with attainment, if you have had a mathematics teacher in your second year in secondary school missing for a term, that it does impact? It must have an impact. Why do you think it has taken so long for us to reach this point in time?

[39] **Mr Evans:** We have not monitored it closely enough. I think that our suspicion was that this was not being monitored effectively and we have been proved right. We still have the issue—and this is the challenge for Welsh Government, as policy makers working with delivery partners, whom we cannot forget in this—of too much variability not just in how local authorities treat the effectiveness of cover, but how schools treat it. In some areas, the heads will take a very active role, and in some it will be left to cover supervisors. We have situations where, in some schools, for example, if a teacher is away for a day, they might bring in a high-level teaching assistant, and in others schools we have a position where it might be 10 days where the HLTA might be covering. So, we do not have that granularity, I suppose.

[40] As to why this has not been picked up before, I think that we have had a suspicion for a couple of years, which is why we went to both Estyn and the audit office. However, I am not sure why it was not picked up before that.

[41] **Julie Morgan:** In your previous comments, I think that you said that you will be benchmarking best practice, so that you can learn from best practice in all of the schools.

Would there be any plan to publish data on sickness absence at a local authority level?

[42] **Mr Evans:** I think that that would be the aim, and not just at local authority level. I will bring in Brett in a second, but the experience that the department has had over the past couple of years is that when we have begun the stocktakes, where we went in and looked at the data of various schools, it became fairly apparent that most individual schools were unaware of their performance vis-à-vis competing schools. I think that one of the big improvements made over the past couple of years in relation to banding, which I know is controversial, in getting the data out there and publishing it for parents through the local school, is that people can actually see what performance is like.

[43] Schools, by and large, are competitive. That is not a bad thing. However, what we are seeing is that local authorities will now be scrutinised far more strictly on how their performance is against competing local authorities. I think that one of the roles of the school improvement system, which, of course, will be driven through the consortia, will actually be drilling down to the performance, not just of individual local authorities, but individual schools within those local authorities, to look at how they are managing the absence cover.

[44] **Julie Morgan:** Will you be publishing that?

[45] **Mr Evans:** We would hope that it will be published.

[46] **Dr Pugh:** I think that the only reservation that would have to go with that would be the size of small primary schools: you would have to be very careful not to publish information that would breach data protection, because, if you have a very small primary school and there is someone who has a long-term sickness absence, you could actually identify that person. That is the same in terms of student assessment data, because it is still not published for those small schools where there is a danger that an individual child—if there is one child in year 6, shall we say—will be known from that.

[47] **Mr Evans:** However, barring where there are concerns, we would expect those data to be published. We are already publishing a significant amount of data on school performance for my local school. I can only see that increasing.

[48] **Julie Morgan:** Do you think that that would increase a sort of competitiveness between schools to achieve more?

[49] **Mr Evans:** I think that it is partly about competitiveness, but it is about scrutiny as well. If you are being benchmarked against high-performing schools at a range of factors—. The cover of absence, of course, is just one factor in school performance. We are now publishing data on all manner of factors of school performance. It will be one of that suite. So, I think that headteachers—and governors, of course, who will be monitoring the headteachers, as will parents—will be looking through the various aspects of performance and actually holding the schools to account. One of the things that we are very keen to do is to make sure that parents have a significant role, as well as the governors, in holding schools to account for their performance.

[50] **Darren Millar:** Just in terms of the training for headship qualification, to what extent is teacher absence and managing staff an element of the national professional qualification for headship?

[51] **Mr Evans:** Perhaps Phil could answer that.

[52] **Mr Jones:** Yes. Successful award of the NPQH is dependent on providing evidence of meeting the leadership standards. The leadership standards include a section on managing

the school, which includes a responsibility for managing staff. The standards do not go down to the level of detail of actually referring specifically to managing absence, but certainly include managing staff to achieve the aims and priorities of the school.

[53] **Darren Millar:** Should they cover managing sickness absence?

[54] **Mr Jones:** Whether it is referred to specifically, I do not know, but there certainly needs to be awareness among those leaders who aspire to headship about that responsibility on them, and, certainly, in the work that we are doing on the leadership development programmes, that is something that we could incorporate in there so that, rather than it being something that headteachers focus on just before or when they take up their first headship, it is something that is in their consciousness well before then.

[55] **Darren Millar:** Did you want to come in, Owen?

[56] **Mr Evans:** Just to say that that is a fair point, I think, and I think that we will look at that. What we are trying to do as a department is to make sure that we do bring in scrutiny, but also support. So, we would try to bring in—. We will have a look at whether we can bring in stronger provisions on the headteachers and their NPQH, but we will also look at the sort of support that we can provide through the training that they are being given.

[57] **Darren Millar:** Okay. Thank you. There is just a very brief supplementary question from Oscar, and then we will go to Aled.

[58] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Chair. My concern is this ‘work-related stress’. That term is very common, rather than real sickness, among the teachers who are absent from school. That is a normal phenomenon all over the country. No wonder we are having bad results, when the best teachers are not serving the pupils and the schools. What are you doing? Is it really as a result of the pressure that teachers go through in the work that they do, or the children, their behaviour and other reasons, that leads to people not working as they are supposed to be? And they are getting paid for it.

[59] **Mr Evans:** I cannot give a definitive answer on what is causing the stress, because every case will be different. Over the past 10 years we have taken steps—and, in fairness, there have been steps taken across the UK—in trying to provide teachers with the time that they need to teach. The workload agreement, agreed in 2003, and the ‘rarely cover’ arrangements, agreed in 2009, were put in to give teachers a little more time. You cannot get away from the fact that teaching is quite a stressful occupation and quite a challenging occupation. We, and the employers, in particular, have a duty of care to those teachers. So, we need to make sure that they have the best support possible, but I cannot give a definitive answer on individual stress levels. I think that, as you say, most occupations are stressful, but I think teaching is particularly stressful. We need to make sure that, as I said, we do not bring in just scrutiny, but support.

[60] **Darren Millar:** Okay. Thank you, Oscar. Aled is next.

[61] **Aled Roberts:** Roeddech yn dweud yn gynharach eich bod chi wedi gofyn i Estyn a’r archwilydd cyffredinol i edrych i mewn i’r sefyllfa hon. A oedd hynny achos eich bod yn teimlo bod y cynnydd o ran y defnydd o athrawon cyflenwi yn amharu ar gyrhaeddiad plant o fewn ein hysgolion ni? **Aled Roberts:** You said earlier that you had asked Estyn and the auditor general to look into this situation. Was that because you felt that the increase in the use of supply teachers was having a negative effect on the attainment of children within our schools?

[62] **Mr Evans:** Rydym wedi edrych **Mr Evans:** We have been looking through

drwy bob agwedd o'r hyn all amharu ar welliant ysgolion. Fel rhan o'r ymholiadau hynny, un o'r pethau a wnaethom edrych arnynt oedd fel oedd *supply cover* yn gweithio dros y wlad. Felly, dyna'r hyn sydd wedi sbarduno'r ffaith ein bod yn edrych i mewn i'r peth. Ar sawl agwedd, rydym wedi gallu ateb ein cwestiynau ein hunain, ond un o'r meysydd lle nad oeddem yn siŵr, a lle yr oeddem yn gallu gweld bod gwerth gwneud mwy o waith arno, oedd sut ydym yn cyflenwi absenoldeb o'r dosbarth. Felly, mae'n rhywbeth rydym wedi cael amheuan amdano ac yn un o'r meysydd lle nad oedd yr *evidence* yr oedd ei angen gennym. Dyna pam y gwnaethom wahodd Estyn a'r archwilydd cyffredinol i edrych i mewn i'r peth.

[63] **Aled Roberts:** Mae'n amlwg o'r adroddiad fod prifathrawon rhai ysgolion wedi edrych ar ddarpariaeth athrawon cyflenwi fel rhywbeth gweinyddol a bod staff wrth gefn yn gwneud yr holl drefniadau ac nad oedd y prifathrawon a'r dirprwyon yn gyfrifol o gwbl am weld pwy fyddai'n cael eu defnyddio i gyflenwi. Roeddech hefyd yn dweud yn gynharach fod rhai ysgolion wedi gweld eu defnydd fel mater o gadw dosbarth yn ddistaw yn hytrach na dysgu plant. Felly, a yw prifathrawon yn deall effaith defnydd athrawon cyflenwi mewn rhai achosion ar gyrhaeddiad eu plant pan fo'r holl bwysau hyn am ryw dair neu bedair blynedd wedi bod ar gyrhaeddiad plant?

[64] **Mr Evans:** Rwy'n credu bod y prifathrawon gorau yn deall. Mae'r prifathrawon nad ydynt ymysg y goreuon heb ddeall. Fel ym mhob maes, bydd rhai pobl yn deall yn gyflymach nag eraill. Ar ddiwedd y dydd, mae llawer o'r gwella rydym yn ei ddisgwyl wrth ysgolion yn dod o'r prifathro ac felly mae'n rhaid i ni wneud yn siŵr, unwaith eto, fod rhyw fath o *scrutiny* o sut y maent yn edrych ar y materion hyn o fewn eu hysgolion ond hefyd ein bod yn edrych ar sut yr ydym yn ceisio helpu'r prifathrawon hynny i ddeall bod hyn yn bwysig a dyma'r fath o bethau y dylent fod yn edrych arnynt. Felly, un o'r pethau byddem yn gobeithio a fydd yn dod allan o newid y fframwaith a'r ffordd mae Estyn yn mynd i mewn i arolygu yw bod prifathrawon a llywodraethwyr yn edrych mewn llawer mwy o fanylder ar sut

every aspect of what could have a negative impact on school improvement. As part of those enquiries, one of the things that we looked at was how supply cover worked across the country. Therefore, that is what spurred us to look into this. On many aspects, we have been able to answer our questions ourselves, but one of the areas where we were not sure, and where we could see that it was worthwhile doing more work, was how we cover absences from the classroom. Therefore, it is something that we have had our doubts about and one of the areas where we did not have the evidence that we needed. That is why we brought in Estyn and the auditor general to look into things.

Aled Roberts: Evidently, in some schools, according to the report, headteachers have looked at the provision of supply teachers as an administrative exercise and support staff are making all the arrangements and headteachers and the deputy headteachers are not responsible at all for seeing who would be used as supply staff. You also said earlier that some schools had seen their use as an exercise in keeping a class quiet, rather than teaching children. Therefore, do headteachers understand the impact of the use of supply teachers in some cases on the attainment of children when there has been all this pressure for some three or four years on the attainment of children?

Mr Evans: I think that the best headteachers do. The headteachers who are not among the best do not. As in every field, some people will understand more quickly than others. At the end of the day, much of the improvement that we expect from schools comes from the headteacher, and, therefore, we have to ensure, once again, that there is some sort of scrutiny of how they are looking at these issues within their schools, but also that we look at how we try to help those headteachers to understand that this is important and that these are the types of things that they should be looking at. Therefore, one of the things that we would hope will come out of changing the framework and the way that Estyn goes in to inspect schools is that headteachers and governors will look in much greater detail at how dealing with

mae delio ag absenoldeb yn gweithio yn yr ysgol.

absence works in schools.

[65] **Aled Roberts:** Rydych wedi sôn am lywodraethwyr yn gweld sut mae hyn yn gweithio a'r effaith mae'n ei gael ar gyrhaeddiad plant. Rwy'n meddwl y byddai llawer iawn o rieni, 12 mlynedd ar ôl datganoli, yn meddwl, '*Hang on*, ble mae'r prifathrawon hyn, sy'n cael eu talu am addysgu ein plant, ac, yn fwy na hynny, yr uwch swyddogion o fewn llywodraeth leol, mewn rhai adrannau eithaf sylweddol, sydd i fod yn edrych ar gyrhaeddiad, ac adran addysg Llywodraeth Cymru, wedi bod yn yr holl broses hon?'

Aled Roberts: You have talked about governors seeing how this works and the impact that it has on the attainment of children. I think that very many parents, 12 years after devolution, would think, '*Hang on*, where have these headteachers, who are paid for teaching our children, and, more than that, the senior officers within local government, in some quite substantial departments, who are supposed to be looking at attainment, and the education department of the Welsh Government, been in this whole process?'

[66] **Mr Evans:** Gallaf i ond siarad am y blynyddoedd gweddol diweddar ac, fel rwyf wedi dweud o'r blaen, mae'r adran ei hun wedi bod yn edrych i mewn i'r peth achos bod rhyw ddrwgdybiaeth wedi bod gennym nad yw pethau mor ddisglair ag y dylent fod. Dros y sector, mae'n anodd i mi ddweud pam fod rhai prifathrawon wedi cymryd bod hyn yn bwysig a rhai heb. Wrth gwrs, mae'r rhan fwyaf o brifathrawon yn trio gwella sawl peth ar yr un pryd. Efallai bod rhai wedi canolbwyntio ar bethau eraill a heb ganolbwyntio digon ar y pwnc hwn. Yr hyn yr ydym yn ceisio ei wneud yw gwneud yn siŵr bod prifathrawon yn canolbwyntio ar y meysydd pwysig i gyd. Dyna sut, dros amser, rydym yn gwella'r fframwaith, y cymorth rydym yn rhoi iddynt, a hefyd y ffordd y mae Estyn yn arolygu hynny hefyd.

Mr Evans: I can only speak about quite recent years and, as I have said before, the department itself has been looking into this, because we have had a feeling that things are not as good as they should be. Across the sector, it is difficult for me to say why some headteachers have considered this important and others have not. Of course, the majority of headteachers are trying to improve a number of things at the same time. Some may have concentrated on other things and not concentrated sufficiently on this field. What we are trying to do is to ensure that headteachers concentrate on all of the important areas. That is how, over time, we improve the framework, the support that we offer them, and also the way in which Estyn inspects that, too.

09:30

[67] Gofynnaf i Brett ddod i mewn ar y pwynt hwn, oherwydd mae Brett yn gyn-brifathro, ac efallai y gall roi syniad i ni am y fath o bwysau sydd ar brifathrawon a'r ffaith nad yw rhai, efallai, yn canolbwyntio ar hwn.

I will ask Brett to come in on this point, because Brett is a former headteacher, and perhaps he can give us an idea of the sort of pressure that headteachers are under and the fact that some, perhaps, do not concentrate on this.

[68] **Dr Pugh:** There are a number of pressures, as we are aware, on headteachers, not least the need to really drive up standards in Wales. Clearly, their efforts, therefore, would probably be focused on looking at the totality of what is happening within their schools to do that. Having said that, though, it is important within this process to look at the role taken on when the usual class or subject teacher is out of the classroom, and what happens there. As Owen has said, that is why we wanted this report and why we commissioned it. I think that there are also some very important points that we need to be covering in terms of the guidance that will be going out in the summer, for September 2014. What that guidance does is consolidate a lot of guidance that was put together back in 2003 in terms of the workload

agreement and the use of substitute teachers, supply teachers and other staff in classrooms. What this will do is pull together, if you like, a whole process for quality assuring what goes on, giving complete guidance, as a complete entity, not just around sickness absence, but continuing professional development and other meetings that the teachers go to.

[69] I think that where we started to really get the feeling that things were not quite right in terms of covering classrooms when teachers come out was probably not around sickness, but the training aspect and international research about what does and does not work within that training. A lot of evidence has been gathered by various academics to say that the best training is done within schools and between schools in the classroom—a kind of apprenticeship model. That is probably what indicated to us that there may be other issues, therefore, that we needed to look at in terms of the sickness process. That is what is leading us, I suppose, in that sense, to draw together one combined piece of guidance, rather than having several different documents for people, because there are several different documents, I think, that cause people not to be concentrating, and then there is the fact that we are asking Estyn to follow up on the use of that, two years after its introduction.

[70] **Aled Roberts:** Tra ein bod yn sôn am hyfforddiant, mae'r Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc wedi bod yn edrych ar y defnydd o asiantaethau o ran darpariaeth athrawon cyflenwi. Roeddwn yn synnu bod y trefniadau o ran datblygiad proffesiynol yn wahanol ar gyfer yr athrawon o'r asiantaethau o'i gymharu â'r trefniadau ar gyfer yr athrawon cyflenwi hynny sydd ar restrau awdurdodau lleol yn unig. A oes unrhyw dystiolaeth bod y gwahaniaeth o ran y defnydd y mae asiantaethau yn ei wneud o ddatblygiad proffesiynol, a'r ffaith nad yw'r awdurdodau lleol yn darparu datblygiad proffesiynol ar gyfer athrawon cyflenwi sydd ar eu rhestrau nhw, yn cael ei adlewyrchu o ran ansawdd yr athrawon cyflenwi?

Aled Roberts: While we are talking about training, the Children and Young People Committee has been looking at the use of agencies for the provision of supply teachers. I was surprised that the arrangements in terms of professional development for teachers employed by the agencies differ from those for supply teachers who are on local authority lists only. Is there any evidence that the difference with regard to the use made by agencies of professional development, and the fact that local authorities do not provide professional development for the supply teachers on their lists, is reflected in the quality of supply teachers?

[71] **Mr Evans:** Nid oes dystiolaeth sy'n dangos gwahaniaeth o ran pa mor effeithiol yw athrawon o'r asiantaethau a'r rhai o awdurdodau lleol, ond rydym yn amau bod gwahaniaeth, gan nad yw athrawon cyflenwi yn cael mwy o CPD. Felly, mae gennym gyfarfod efo'r asiantaethau i drafod hyn. Un o'r pethau a ddaeth allan o waith y Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc oedd bod amheuaeth bod yr asiantaethau yn enwedig yn gweld CPD fel rhywbeth oedd yn ymwneud â *safeguarding, health and safety* a phethau fel hynny yn unig.

Mr Evans: We have no evidence that shows a difference in terms of how effective teachers from the agencies and teachers from the local authorities are, but we suspect that there is a difference, because the supply teachers do not receive more CPD. Therefore, we have a meeting with the agencies to discuss this. One of the things that came out of the work of the Children and Young People Committee was that there were suspicions that the agencies in particular saw CPD as something that related only to safeguarding, health and safety and so forth.

[72] Mae yna lawer iawn mwy i wneud efo CPD na'r ddau bwnc hynny. Un o'r trafodaethau y byddwn yn eu cael gyda'r asiantaethau fis nesaf yw sut y gallwn wella hynny. Wrth gwrs, mae hyn yn bwydo mewn hefyd i'r ffaith bod y fframwaith pwrcasu—y

There is much more to do with CPD than those two subjects, and one of the discussions that we will have with the agencies next month is how we can improve that. Of course, this feeds in to the fact that the framework contract, which is coming to an

framework contract—sy'n dod i ben fis Chwefror flwyddyn nesaf, yn cael ei ail-dendro gan y WLGA. Felly, rydym yn gweithio gyda'r WLGA yn barod, a byddwn yn cwrdd â'r WLGA fis nesaf i drafod sut y gallwn wella telerau'r cytundebau fframwaith i wneud yn siŵr bod CPD o fewn y cytundebau hynny, ac i wneud yn siŵr bod athrawon cyflenwi yn cael CPD go iawn.

end in February of next year, is being retendered by the WLGA. Therefore, we are working with the WLGA already, and again, we have a meeting with the WLGA next month to discuss how we can improve the terms of the framework contracts to make sure that there is CPD within those contracts and to make sure that supply teachers do receive proper CPD.

[73] **Aled Roberts:** Ond nid yw athrawon cyflenwi sydd ar restrau awdurdodau lleol ar hyn o bryd o reidrwydd yn derbyn datblygiad proffesiynol.

Aled Roberts: However, supply teachers who are on local authority lists at the moment do not necessarily receive professional development.

[74] **Mr Evans:** Na. Mae pob awdurdod lleol yn tueddu i fod braidd yn wahanol. Un o'r ystyriaethau i ni yw gwneud yn siŵr bod pob awdurdod lleol, a'r asiantaethau eu hunain, yn cyrraedd lefel arbennig. Dyna'r trafodaethau rydym yn eu cael â'r WLGA ar y funud—lle i roi'r lefel honno.

Mr Evans: No. Every local authority tends to be different. One of the considerations for us was to ensure that every local authority, and the agencies, got up to a certain level. Those are the discussions that we are having with the WLGA at the moment—where to set that level.

[75] **Jocelyn Davies:** Are they different people, then, who are on the list—agencies and local authorities? Are they completely different people, or are some people on both?

[76] **Mr Evans:** I presume that there may be some people on both, but I will ask Phil and Brett for the detail.

[77] **Mr Jones:** I am sorry, I did not catch the question.

[78] **Jocelyn Davies:** We are talking about supply-teaching agencies and local authority lists as if they are two different groups of people. I am wondering whether there is a considerable crossover. Perhaps you could let us have a note on that, if you have any statistics on it.

[79] **Mr Jones:** We do not hold the membership of either group of supply teachers, so we do not know the extent to which there may be crossover. I suspect that those who remain in the local authority supply pool are probably just on that pool, and those who are working for agencies are a different group of people. I suspect that there is not a great deal of crossover.

[80] **Jocelyn Davies:** We do not know.

[81] **Aled Roberts:** There are some authorities now that require you to be on an agency list rather than on any other list.

[82] **Darren Millar:** In order to reduce the costs. It would be helpful if you could give us some information—or if you have any evidence, to provide it to us—about whether people are registered on more than one list. I think that it would help the inquiry.

[83] **Sandy Mewies:** One of the issues that this report and your responses has thrown up is that, although on one level it looks like a fairly simple inquiry on access levels, in fact it is very complex, because it is the impact that it has on students, and the reasons for it. People are not just off sick; they are off training. Some people are off for a day, some people can be off for months and months, and so on. Looking at your response to the Welsh Government,

your response has been in bullet points, really, because there is not just one thing. You do not hold all the levers, for a start, and there are a lot of levers to pull to get this absolutely right. One thing that I was interested in was: how long do you think it will be before adjustments to the Estyn inspection framework and the role of consortia system leaders as is proposed in your response comes into being? What sort of timescale are we looking for now for improvement?

[84] **Mr Evans:** The majority of the measures that we are bringing in will, I think, have an impact following the summer of 2015. We are consulting on the new regulations this summer, and they will probably be out, once we have the guidelines out and the information, in 2015. The guidelines will then, as I have said, be looked at by Estyn. When I say inspected by Estyn, I should be factually correct and say that there will be a thematic study following the implementation of the guidelines to make sure that they are being followed. That will happen, I think, in 2015-16, or will it be 2016-17?

[85] **Mr Jones:** Yes, 2016-17.

[86] **Mr Evans:** A year after that, to make sure that it is happening. We would expect some things to improve rather more quickly, though. One thing that we are looking for from the regional consortia coming in, and the requirement that we are going to be looking at the data in more detail, is that—. What you tend to have is a signalling process. The minute that we say, 'Actually, no, this is important', we are going to be looking at it. Although it is complex, we need all of the levers, as you say, to start working in the same direction. Typically, in the planning of such organisations, they will start moving towards it before we even bring the new regulations in. I would hope that we will see an increase in monitoring, in particular, in record keeping of how the effect of this is going, but also in the types of feedback that headteachers will be taking on the performance of supply teachers in the classroom. We will be signalling that we are moving. Meetings are already taking place. We will be having various meetings, the sector will be aware that we will be bringing in new school development plans, that we will be changing the regulations and that Estyn will be doing a thematic inspection, so I suspect that the sector will move there before we actually bring the plans in.

[87] **Sandy Mewies:** Is one of the main aims to minimise absence?

[88] **Mr Evans:** Partly.

[89] **Sandy Mewies:** What sort of level are you looking at? Is it below the level in England? Are you looking at an average level?

[90] **Mr Evans:** I am not sure that you can compare like for like there. It is becoming more fragmented over the border, so finding information that corresponds with ours is going to be more and more difficult. As our data improve, there is a fear that theirs may not. The second point is that there has been a relatively significant decrease over the last year in the number of sickness days. We saw a decrease of about 25,000 days over the past 12 months—roughly about 12% of the total. We want to push down on sickness absence, but we want to manage it carefully. Typically, there is preponderance within the sickness absences for fairly long-term sickness—I think that the average is about 11 days. So we need more unanimity across that, but I think that it is for every part of the system. As Brett said, the more evidence we look at, the more it appears that the best type of training for teachers is within the classroom, so there is a question around why we are pulling them out. There is also a role for Government here. One of the things that we have to look at internally is to what extent, in all of the programmes and all of the budgets that we expend on CPD and the like, are we being as responsible as we can be about how we support and ensure that the impact on the classroom is minimised. For example, we have a proforma across the department now on

which any CPD that is likely to be driven and that might have an impact on classroom absence is monitored. There will be checks and balances around whether it is necessary and can we manage it in a better way. We would expect the consortia and local government to be doing the same, so that it is throughout the system.

[91] **Sandy Mewies:** When all of this is in place with, hopefully, monitoring of the situation and its impact, would you expect schools to put in their prospectus, for example, how they compare? It is peer pressure, is it not? Will it be at local authority level? Will you be able to tell by looking at what the local authority publishes? Schools now have to put certain things in their prospectus. That is one question, but you may want to answer the other one. There is a significant lack of teachers in some specialisms in secondary schools that the Government is trying to address. It might be the case, might it not, that a mathematics teacher who is off on long-term sickness is not replaced by a specialist in that subject? The same could be in one of the other STEM subjects. Is there any evidence to show that it is a significant factor in terms of impact? You may not be able to answer that question, because you have already said that the correlation is not clear.

[92] **Mr Evans:** I will ask Phil to answer that and then perhaps I will come in at the end.

[93] **Mr Jones:** In answer to the first part of your question, I think that there are some risks involved in publicly identifying absence at a school level. Some schools will suffer long-term absence of particular members of staff for unavoidable reasons that can significantly distort their attendance data. Perhaps if we were to publish that, school by school, it might give a slightly misleading message, whereas another school could have a similar level of absence that is composed of lots of short-term absences—perhaps for courses, perhaps for other reasons that may not be entirely necessary. We would have to be quite cautious about that school-by-school comparison. However, the publication of local authority statistics would be helpful, and, I think, would support more action in some local authorities where it is not already taking place to bring pressure and guidance to bear on schools to help them to better manage attendance and absence.

09:45

[94] **Mr Evans:** On the second half of the question, I think that it is genuinely an issue for us. We have certain subject specialties in which we are finding it difficult to recruit. The Welsh language is a considerable issue, and these problems tend to be particularly compounded in rural areas. We are trying at the moment to rectify the situation as much as possible through the recruitment route. We have quite healthy subsidies or bursaries for teachers coming into the profession if they can show expertise in certain areas where we have shortages. We are also trying to encourage more Welsh speakers into the profession. We are also trying to encourage quality, to be honest, but this is a different conversation. So, we are trying to rectify that. However, we have to face the fact that it is very difficult. This is not just a Wales issue; this is a UK issue. It has been difficult to recruit people, particularly in some of the sciences, into the profession. We have changed the bursaries. They are now significantly more generous than they have been in the past, but we will be monitoring closely to what extent we are attracting more teachers into the profession.

[95] One of the other things that we are looking at, and which we have started talking to the higher education sector about, is that I was quite struck when I went to Imperial College London that one of modules taught as part of their physics course was a teaching module. It is designed to whet the appetite of potential teachers to want to go into the profession. They have only just started that module, and they are working with a number of schools across London. We are trying to see whether that works in encouraging more people studying physics, a subject in which we are very short of teachers, to go into the profession.

[96] **Sandy Mewies:** Finally, you talk about innovation. In some parts of America, for example, you have peripatetic teachers who move from school to school, rather than being based in one place. Have you considered solving shortages in consortia by looking at peripatetic teaching in specialisms?

[97] **Dr Pugh:** It is something that we have touched on tangentially in terms of looking at federations between schools and cluster groups of schools. That does not necessarily mean a formal federation; it can be just done by groups of schools working together. There is a lot of evidence of schools being able to provide all kinds of support through that, especially small primary schools working in groups together in terms of staffing specialities. It can also work very well in terms of raising standards of teaching generally—teachers not only see the teachers in their own school, but they get to see other teachers as part of a uniform timetabling. So, you are not taking someone out of a classroom; it is actually what happens.

[98] **Sandy Mewies:** They share knowledge.

[99] **Dr Pugh:** They share the knowledge, and we know that the top-performing education countries and authorities share that knowledge systematically on that basis. That is what makes for very good progress.

[100] **Darren Millar:** May I ask for a point of information to support the committee's inquiry? You mentioned the 25,000 day reduction in sickness absence levels just a few moments ago. Do you have any information that you can send on to us after today just to show us where that has arisen, and how it might have arisen as well in your estimation? It would be useful.

[101] **Mr Evans:** Yes, we have. I have a statistical report with me. We will send you a copy of this. This is a statistics report of June this year noting teachers in service vacancies and sickness absence.

[102] **Darren Millar:** Super.

[103] **Jocelyn Davies:** Chair, I think that it was issued in June of last year, because we do not have the statistics for this year.

[104] **Mr Evans:** Sorry, you are right; it is for June of last year. I am getting ahead of myself. *[Laughter.]* It does not often happen.

[105] **Jocelyn Davies:** What period do those statistics cover?

[106] **Mr Evans:** That was taken from January 2013 for the previous 12 months.

[107] **Jocelyn Davies:** Most of the questions that I was going to ask have been covered, but just for clarification, you mentioned the issuing of the complete guidance for 2014, Mr Pugh, so it will be issued sometime this year. I assume that that is going to cover effective practice and guidelines to schools, and that that will then be inspected from next year onwards.

[108] **Dr Pugh:** The guidance will come out ready for September 2014. It will be a complete set of guidance looking at the use of what are generally called substitute teachers and other people who replace the usual class teacher. It will look at it, not just from sickness absence, but from the point of view of training and other causes of absence, and it will look at rationalising that. We will then ask Estyn to do a thematic inspection, starting in 2016-17.

[109] **Jocelyn Davies:** Sorry—2016.

[110] **Dr Pugh:** We have given it two years to embed in there. This will pull everything together in one source. It will also tie in with another piece of secondary legislation to be introduced from 2015. That is the school development plans, which will have to show the clear lines of staff development and why they have been identified within schools. So, you go right the way through the whole process of actually analysing what the needs are, to address the national priorities, and how best to address and rationalise that. In effect, good schools have always done this. Through various instruments we are trying to ensure that all schools do this.

[111] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes. I assume that you are drawing on the best practice in the best schools in order that others can do that. Okay. In relation to the continuous professional development of supply teachers, how will you know whether what you have set out in your response has been effective? As you mentioned earlier, just keeping children quiet is not quite enough. We need to know that that supply teacher covering teacher absence is effective teaching in itself.

[112] **Dr Pugh:** Absolutely. Part of the guidance will require headteachers to quality assure where it is going on in the school. In terms of the actual training requirement for the supply teachers themselves, I will hand over to Phil in a second because he has all of the detail of that at his fingertips.

[113] **Jocelyn Davies:** No pressure, Phil. *[Laughter.]*

[114] **Dr Pugh:** That becomes more difficult, as you can imagine, because the supply teacher group is not a fixed group by nature; it is a very transitory group of people. Therefore, we are seeking to get more of a handle on it. I do not know whether anyone will ever manage to get a complete handle on it, if I am really honest. I now turn to Phil.

[115] **Mr Jones:** I think that the most important thing is for schools to raise their own expectations of what they expect from staff providing cover for absence. We heard earlier that there seems to be differences between some schools that seem to manage absence extremely well, and maintain quality of learning during those periods of time, and other schools that do not. Where that is not happening, it is possibly because schools have the wrong expectation of what can be achieved in a cover situation, and it becomes a bit of a gap-filling exercise rather than an opportunity to maintain the continuity of learning for pupils and advancing that learning through the activity that is taking place.

[116] Schools hold the key to this because they are the ones that commission the supply worker agencies to provide them with people. They are asking the local authorities to send them people from their pool. Through our guidance, we hope to encourage headteachers to raise their expectations and to become far more fussy about the quality of the practitioners who come into their school, and for them to take the line that anyone standing in front of their pupils is an important person who will have an impact on the quality of learning and the quality of learner outcomes. That starts to send a message back to the employers of those supply workers that they need to provide people who are equipped with the appropriate skills and training to provide the services required at schools. So, there is a responsibility on employers to ensure that the people within their agency or in their pool are properly equipped to provide the level of service that schools require. Schools are in a very good position to demonstrate that that is what they demand.

[117] **Aled Roberts:** How can they be properly equipped if, as supply teachers, they only get paid when they are teaching in a school? There is no provision for CPD to be provided by the local authority to those supply teachers, unless they pay for it themselves.

[118] **Mr Jones:** That is the case as it currently stands, but that does not mean that that is

how it has to be. Those are the arrangements that agencies choose to adopt. If they so wish, agencies could provide the people on their books with appropriate CPD, but they would need to think about how they cover that as part of their business arrangements, and there may be a cost that would get passed on to schools, I do not know. However, it does not have to be the case that they are not provided with CPD.

[119] **Aled Roberts:** However, outside those agencies, supply teachers who are on local authority lists will not want to go on CPD courses because, if they are on the CPD course, they are not getting paid.

[120] **Mr Jones:** Again, that is the case as it currently stands. However, if schools are demonstrating that they clearly expect people to be supplied to them with the appropriate skills, then I would say that it is incumbent on supply teacher employers—be they local authorities or agencies—to make the necessary arrangements, whatever the associated costs, to ensure that supply teachers possess those skills.

[121] **Aled Roberts:** Have you assessed those increased costs?

[122] **Mr Jones:** No, I have not.

[123] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, what you are saying then is that the school, as the client, could be saying to the agencies, ‘This is what we want, and these people must have this, this and this, otherwise we are not interested’. So, the customer could, in fact, change the way that things are currently arranged, just by changing the specification of what it wants.

[124] **Mr Jones:** Yes.

[125] **Jocelyn Davies:** Okay.

[126] **Mr Evans:** May I pick up on that? These are some of the conversations that are being had at the moment, with the WLGA and with schools, about what the next procurement framework looks like. However, we cannot ignore the fact that, if it does get to a situation where we are not only paying for additional CPD, but having the double-whammy of paying for supply teachers’ additional time. Given that we are not awash with cash, some sort of compromise will need to be found.

[127] **Jocelyn Davies:** Does the Welsh Government have any expectations about the proportion of registered supply teachers who should have demonstrated that they have met the practicing teacher standards, or are registered as participating in statutory induction?

[128] **Mr Jones:** Yes. It is a requirement on all registered teachers now to have undergone induction. In that sense, that has not changed. What we have done is to introduce a number of measures to improve access to induction for supply teachers. We have made it much easier for supply teachers to register short-term periods of employment as part of their induction period, whereas, previously, anything short of a term could not be counted. They can now count each session, which is a half day, towards their induction period. Therefore, over an extended period of time, they can achieve the necessary number of sessions to meet the induction requirement.

[129] We have made it a provision for all newly qualified teachers—irrespective of whether they are currently employed or whether they are supply teachers—that they have access to an external mentor. That entitlement kicks in after 190 sessions, normally for those who are employed in schools. However, we recognised that supply teachers, because they are not normally based in a school—particularly short-term supply teachers—were disadvantaged by that, so, for short-term supply teachers, we have changed the trigger point to 50 sessions.

Therefore, effectively, after 25 days of supply teaching, they get access to an external mentor, so they are getting that sort of guidance, irrespective of what support they are getting in individual schools.

[130] **Jocelyn Davies:** Do you know what proportion of newly qualified teachers have registered to complete induction by the supply route that you have just described?

[131] **Mr Jones:** Do you mean how many are in the current year or how many in total?

[132] **Jocelyn Davies:** The proportion of newly qualified teachers choosing to do it through this supply route. Have you any idea?

[133] **Mr Jones:** I do not have those figures to hand, but we could provide you with those figures.

[134] **Jocelyn Davies:** Okay. Do you know how many supply teachers are undertaking the Master's in educational practice?

[135] **Mr Jones:** Again, I could provide you with those figures. It is not likely to be a significantly large number, because, although supply teachers have the same access, in theory, to the Master's programme as other teachers, they all have to meet the same eligibility criteria, and passing those eligibility criteria requires a minimum length of contract, and employment at the particular time of year when the Master's programme starts. The length of contract stipulation is really to reflect the practice-based nature of the MEP programme, which requires extended contact with the same groups of pupils, which, of course, is a difficulty for some supply teachers.

10:00

[136] **Jocelyn Davies:** That covers my question.

[137] **Mike Hedges:** The Welsh Government's policies and initiatives themselves contribute to the demand for cover, and the auditor general's report suggests that around one sixth of expenditure on cover is funded through Welsh Government grants. Why can this not be organised in such a way that school INSET days could be used for this training—that is, having it planned a lot more in advance than it is at the moment?

[138] **Mr Evans:** Perhaps I can lead on this, and then I will ask Brett to come in. There are a number of things in the short term that we are introducing to make sure that this happens on a smaller scale than has previously been seen, but there are also a number of issues that we are looking at on a longer-term scale. Obviously, we do not apologise for increasing considerably the amount of training that we are funding through the various grants and programmes, but we realise that it is putting pressure on schools and causing unnecessary absence. There is better planning. As I have said, we now also have a portfolio across the department, so, when a new or existing grant is going out, we need to have shown that we have looked at the sort of impact that that will have. So, for example, on the pupil deprivation grant, and on the schools effectiveness grant, we are introducing criteria retrospectively to try to support the minimisation of teachers being away.

[139] In the longer term, as Brett has said, we are looking at more training mechanisms that do not take the teacher out of the classroom; they tend to be more effective. One of the areas of school support that will increase the most over the next 18 months, in particular, is the area of school-to-school support and peer support, which is probably to be welcomed. I do not know whether Brett wishes to say anything.

[140] **Dr Pugh:** Yes. The development of those alternatives and the use of twilight sessions, as well as the closure days within schools, are important. Elements of current Welsh Government programmes use those alternative methods, one of which is the national support programme for the literacy and numeracy framework, which involves a lot of in-school support within classrooms. Another one is the development of professional learning communities, which are set up within schools and between schools, to work on particular areas, usually around the three focused areas of literacy, numeracy and reducing the impact of deprivation on achievement. Other programmes already in place include the lead and emerging practitioner schools projects, where there is long-term planning in terms of going from school to school, classroom practitioners being shared between schools, work going on within the classroom itself, rather than people being taken out of the classroom, teaching alongside other teachers, and work using a kind of apprenticeship model. Another example is the key stage 4 project that is being run by Education London, which works within the schools, in the classrooms alongside the teachers, showing exemplar lessons and exemplar materials.

[141] Another aspect that should not be underestimated is the impact of web-based learning in terms of exemplar materials from school to school. That involves film footage, interactive footage, webinar discussion groups, et cetera; they are very powerful tools in terms of moving teacher practice forward. We have certainly definitely seen that in terms of our work with 16-year-olds to improve mathematics teaching.

[142] **Mike Hedges:** Thank you for that information. The question that I asked, and I will try to ask it again, is this: why can you not plan it so that schools can use INSET days rather than having to take teachers out of classrooms?

[143] **Dr Pugh:** That is very much what we are expecting to happen within the new school development plans—that there has to be a rationalisation of the development for a whole school, a year in advance, so that there are very clear lines based on self-evaluation, based, if you like, on practice review and development. It actually takes the teacher from where they are currently to where they need to be. So, you will then see that it is quite rationalised.

[144] **Mr Jones:** Just to add, another thing that we asked Estyn to look at within the last year or so was how schools use their statutory INSET days. On the whole, it has provided quite a positive report about how schools were already using their INSET days, because I think that, anecdotally, we have occasionally received the opposite views. So, that was reassuring. However, bearing in mind the points that Brett made earlier about effective CPD happening in the classroom, on those INSET days the pupils are not there. So, if it is about working in the classroom with pupils to improve the quality of teaching, some of that work necessarily has to happen when the school is in session. So, while Brett is absolutely right that we try to minimise the amounts of absence while pupils are in school, it is impossible to eradicate it completely because some activities need to take place in those sessions.

[145] **Darren Millar:** Very briefly, Aled, you had a supplementary question as did Sandy.

[146] **Aled Roberts:** Rydych wedi sôn am y defnydd o fentoriaid allanol o fewn y radd Meistr. Rwy'n poeni braidd am rai o'r trefniadau ynglŷn â staff yn cael eu cymryd allan. Ai Llywodraeth Cymru sy'n gyfrifol am yr holl drefniadau o ran cydnabod pa staff sy'n cael eu defnyddio, ac a ydych yn ymwybodol bod rhai staff wedi cael eu cymryd allan o'r ysgolion yn gyfan gwbl am wythnosau tra nad oeddent yn cael eu

Aled Roberts: You mentioned the use of external mentors in the Master's degree. I am a little concerned about some of the arrangements for staff being taken out. Is the Welsh Government responsible for all the arrangements for recognising which staff are used, and are you aware that some members of staff have been taken out of schools completely for weeks when they are not being used for this mentoring at all?

defnyddio o gwbl ar gyfer y mentora hwn?

[147] **Mr Evans:** Gofynnaf i Phil ymateb i **Mr Evans:** I will ask Phil to come in on this. hynny.

[148] **Mr Jones:** We are aware of that programme, and it is one of those areas of activity that are being investigated by the Welsh Government. We have introduced a programme of external mentoring for all newly qualified teachers, those undergoing induction and also those participating in the Master's programme. We were very keen for that mentoring to be provided by experienced practitioners, because the whole point of the mentoring is to improve the quality of practice in those newly qualified teachers. They are going to benefit most from people who are already doing the job.

[149] It involves those external mentors coming out of their host schools to work with the NQTs, but we see that very much as part of our school-to-school support arrangements, because it is not entirely one-way traffic. In providing the mentoring service to NQTs, those experienced practitioners are getting out into other schools and bringing back to their own school the experience of working and seeing standards being raised in other contexts.

[150] We do not expect those mentors to be out of their school on a full-time basis; in the majority of cases, it will be on a part-time basis, so they would still retain responsibility for the classes that they teach. They are out on pre-arranged dates, so it is a planned absence, and that provides the opportunity for schools to assess the impact of that absence to ensure, before they decide to allow the mentor to be involved in the programme in the first place, that they can provide a level of cover that protects pupils' learning and ensures continuity of learning. So, we would not expect schools to allow any of their practitioners to act as external mentors unless they have assessed the likely impact of that.

[151] **Aled Roberts:** I follow that entirely. The point that I am making is that I am aware of cases where people who have been given early retirement, who are no longer in the school setting, have been chosen as external mentors, but then they are not used at all while other staff are taken from the school environment, and the school then, in one subject, had to have supply cover for half a term. During that half a term, it is alleged that that person did not actually do any mentoring because the identification of the people who were to be mentored had not been completed.

[152] **Darren Millar:** Can you send us a note on what you are doing to ensure that the mentoring is effective and good value for money in terms of an investment? You have given us a very positive impression of mentoring, but if these sorts of examples are rife and not just one-off examples, then we clearly need to better manage it and get a grip. Sandy, you had a brief supplementary question as well, and then I want to come to Jenny.

[153] **Sandy Mewies:** It is a similar question, and I think that Mr Jones gave us some clarification of it. There is a lot of training that goes on on INSET days and in other ways. How is it monitored that it is successful? You can have a load of people sitting all day in an INSET day and they will really take value away from it, but I suppose that it is just as possible—and I am not just talking about teachers, but all sorts of people—that you go to another training day and you think, 'Hmm'. So, is there any external monitoring of what goes on?

[154] The second point is a bit simplistic, I suppose. Are there any existing teacher training schemes, including the postgraduate certificate in education, if it is still going on—I am a bit out of things there—where teaching in schools is a bigger part? It is a daunting task, actually, whatever anybody thinks, to stand up in front of a class and teach when you are new. It is a very daunting task. I think that people think that it is an easy task, but I certainly do not. I

have seen it happen. The more comfortable that you are with that experience, the better it is.

[155] **Mr Evans:** I will bring in Phil in a second. On performance, I was at a school quite recently where they were using one of their INSET days directly as a result of the literacy and numeracy framework. They were analysing performance across all the questions asked and identifying where they had areas of weakness—for example, it was going to have a mathematics day. So, it was great to see that some of the procedures that we had put in place were being used. The headteacher there will be monitoring very clearly what the results are and how those improve. That is just one example. I think that headteachers will have quite a significant role to play in how improvement, through investment in INSET days, will take place.

[156] We are moving away from an age when there were mass participation courses that teachers tended to go to for a couple of days. There are quite tailored responses now. One of the things with the national support programme that Brett mentioned is that contractors will actually go into schools and do a diagnostic of exactly what sort of training will be required there. So, there will be quite a significant refocusing on actually what this training is and what it will deliver.

[157] My last point is on the fact that it is daunting. I have met a few NQTs and, actually, a few people who have been in the profession for 20 or 30 years, who still remember, quite alarmingly clearly, their first few weeks in school and the challenges therewith. We are looking at teacher training at the moment. It will not impact for some time, but we are trialling such things as Teach First, where you take the best graduates possible and they will have a much shorter induction into the teaching profession before they are put into schools. Of course, you might have watched a series that is out at the moment—I cannot remember whether it is on BBC Two and I forget its name—showing the experiences of a Teach First equivalent. It is fairly harrowing, but some of the success rates that they have seen on the programme have been quite noteworthy. We are trialling it in Wales to see how well it works. It is not an approach that is trialled everywhere, but we are looking at it to see how it works. Phil, perhaps you would like to say something on that.

[158] **Darren Millar:** If you could be very brief, as we are up against the clock now and I want to get through the remaining people who want to come in.

[159] **Sandy Mewies:** We could just have a note on that.

[160] **Darren Millar:** Yes, but if you want to say something, you may do so, but very briefly.

[161] **Mr Jones:** Very briefly, on the monitoring of INSET days, that was the reason that we asked Estyn to look at that for us, because we were similarly concerned about what they were being used for. However, on a school-by-school basis, we would expect governors to be challenging headteachers on how they are making use of INSET time, and the school development plan will provide a place where headteachers will be able to set out how they intend to use INSET days as part of their CPD programmes.

[162] **Jenny Rathbone:** I am sure that you would expect all school governing bodies, which normally include the headteacher, and all local authorities to be monitoring the total cost of external cover, whether or not it is funded through Welsh Government grants et cetera. However, it has clearly not been happening across the board. So, what, specifically, do you think is required to ensure that both those organisations are carrying out their duties, particularly in the light of possible changes to local authorities and the changes proposed to the arrangements for delivering education services? It is a bit of a moving feast at the moment.

[163] **Mr Evans:** I would be surprised—although, sometimes, I should not be—if headteachers were not monitoring the spend. I think that it is more about the effectiveness. We have struggled sometimes with the local authorities aggregating up those data to see what the total picture is. So, even now, I think that the Wales Audit Office struggled with two or three local authorities to get accurate data and what they are. One of the things that will hopefully improve through this process is that they will monitor the spend not only at the school level, but what is aggregated up and will see whether there are any issues on a local authority basis. I think that local authorities will have to get more cognisant of what their benchmark spend is against other areas, and whether that constitutes effective value for money, or not.

[164] One of the questions that I had for the audit office is about the increase of, I think, 7% over the past five or six years and whether that was real or nominal. Sorry, I am not sure whether I am allowed to ask questions—

10:15

[165] **Darren Millar:** It is a real increase.

[166] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, sticking with headteachers, you have already said that, in some cases, headteachers are only monitoring whether or not the class is being kept quiet when there is a supply teacher in. Therefore, in those cases, it is possible that they are not then looking at the cost in relation to how, otherwise, they might be spending that aspect of their budget, if they are not managing their absences effectively?

[167] **Mr Evans:** I should state for the record, first of all, that I do not believe that all headteachers are taking that approach of just keeping classes quiet.

[168] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, of course not.

[169] **Mr Evans:** That is not the case. I think that it is an investment decision, at the end of the day, for every head, because they will be looking at the potential costs of a supply teacher against cover by a higher level teaching assistant, versus, sometimes, a colleague or a cover supervisor. This is something that the school development plans should be addressing, namely, the decisions made by the headteacher in deciding what sort of cover to put in, and—probably more importantly—what impact those decisions have on the educational journey of those learners in that classroom; I think that that will be the priority. Therefore, it is not a precise science, but it is something that I think that all headteachers—as opposed to the best headteachers—will now have to weigh and balance far more, about what type of investment they make in the classroom.

[170] I do not know whether Phil or Brett want to come in on that.

[171] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. I want to pursue also the role of school governing bodies. How are we going to ensure that the finance lead and the chair of governors, at the very least, understand the need to analyse the budget spend in this respect, while also understanding that teachers need PPA time, and that there therefore needs to be a strategy for, ‘How am I going to cover my PPA time?’, which is the known aspect of absence, quite apart from the sickness absence, which is unpredictable?

[172] **Mr Jones:** On your last point about PPA, I think that that was a concern that we had with some of the data that had been provided to the audit office for this particular work. We do not consider PPA to be a cover situation—it is part of the permanent staffing arrangements of the school. Therefore, even though there may be situations in which schools have decided

to use a supply teacher during that period of PPA, on a regular basis, it is not an absence, because teachers can only be contracted to be in front of their pupils for a maximum of 90% of the weekly timetable. Therefore, it is just part of the school staffing arrangements. I think that what has happened with some of the data that have been provided to the audit office is that local authorities included some of the PPA arrangements in those data—and we do not know to what extent—which may have distorted the—

[173] **Darren Millar:** It looks as though that was an element that was provided, but we are not sure as to the extent of that.

[174] **Mr Evans:** Moving on to the specific question, on one side, the school development plans will now require headteachers to collect that information; on the other hand, the regulations that will come into force in autumn 2015 will require headteachers to report to governors on it.

[175] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. I think that all these things are locked into each other, are they not?

[176] **Mr Evans:** Yes.

[177] **Jenny Rathbone:** If you do not have effective PPA, you do not have effective lesson plans, and then you have the supply teacher coming in, and what are they supposed to be teaching if it is not clear?

[178] **Mr Evans:** Yes, I agree.

[179] **Jenny Rathbone:** It is down to the leadership of the headteacher, really, is it not? I have served on governing bodies in England and here. Some headteachers complain about the tardiness of the capability competency arrangements, where they have concerns. Although the terms and conditions for teachers are not devolved, my impression is that it is dealt with with much more vigour where I was previously. Therefore, I just wonder how much that is to do with culture, as opposed to what is on the piece of paper, in the contract.

[180] **Mr Jones:** Just for information, we have just introduced national guidance on capability for teachers in Wales, where, previously, I think that each local authority had its own guidance. Therefore, to introduce some consistency, we now have national guidance, and we are now looking at similar guidance for headteachers as well, just to complete the set. So, we hope that that will have an effect on the consistency with which capability is being dealt with in schools.

[181] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay.

[182] **Darren Millar:** There is one final and very important question from Oscar.

[183] **Mohammad Asghar:** I have a question from my area. Only a couple of weeks ago, one of my constituents turned up in my constituency office with his child, and he did not want to go to school because his teacher had moved on. Do you have any procedure or process in schools, when a new teacher comes in and the old one goes, whereby the old one introduces the new one and they have a few days together? Having a new teacher has a huge impact on some children. If one child is not getting on with that teacher, I am sure there might be others who feel the same. This child wanted to go to a different school—

[184] **Jocelyn Davies:** To follow the teacher. [*Laughter.*]

[185] **Mohammad Asghar:** Perhaps. He was in such a state of mind that he did not want to

go to school.

[186] **Darren Millar:** It does not directly impact on teacher absence, but we would be interested to know what your response is, briefly.

[187] **Mr Evans:** I will turn to my colleagues as to whether there is anything written down, but I suspect it is best practice that a teacher would introduce a new teacher.

[188] **Darren Millar:** It is difficult with handovers, because of school terms et cetera and commitments to their previous employer, is it not?

[189] **Mr Jones:** I think that it is an issue of continuity of learning, and, again, the responsibility lies with the headteacher to look at what arrangements need to be in place to ensure continuity, particularly if the change comes during the school year. It probably has less of an impact if it happens in the summer and into September, but I think that it is the responsibility of the headteacher to consider that.

[190] **Darren Millar:** I will come back to you, Oscar, for your other questions. Jenny has a question first.

[191] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just have one other question relating to the competency of supply teachers. What is to stop you, schools or local authorities from opening up training that is organised for a particular staff team and inviting people who are currently supply teachers to attend that training as a supernumerary? They would not be paid as such, because they are not on the school books, but could there not be a much more holistic approach to capacity building among supply teachers by offering them training that is laid on for other teachers?

[192] **Mr Jones:** Yes. I do not think there is any reason why that should not happen. One of the difficulties that we have is actually making contact with supply teachers. Obviously, most teachers can be contacted through their school; it is a little harder to make contact with supply teachers. We discussed with the GTCW what level of access we could have to contact information for supply teachers that it holds on its register, and that would at least enable us to then start providing supply teachers with tailored information and perhaps invitations to particular events.

[193] **Darren Millar:** It ought to be straightforward with regard to local authority lists of supply teachers, though. Surely they would have contacts.

[194] **Mr Jones:** Yes, that is more straightforward, but—

[195] **Darren Millar:** We have not even attempted that, have we? Have we attempted that in terms of inviting those on the local authority lists to be able to engage? It would be one way of encouraging them, given that they would have some development opportunities, to register with local authorities, would it not?

[196] **Jenny Rathbone:** Would the possibility of eliminating local authority lists, and instead relying wholly on agencies, assist the task or make it more difficult?

[197] **Mr Evans:** If we had access to the lists, it is as easy to send out to two lists as one. I think that it is an interesting idea. We would probably have to trial it. What you could not have, for example, is a fairly small school putting on some sort of INSET day training and then being deluged. However, I think that it is an interesting idea and we will have a look at it.

[198] **Darren Millar:** Okay, thank you. Oscar has the next question.

[199] **Mohammad Asghar:** Mr Evans, who should be responsible for ensuring that schools follow appropriate guidance and practice in pre-employment checks and for providing supply staff with necessary child safeguarding information? Do governors have any responsibility there?

[200] **Mr Evans:** Yes, I believe that they do. I think that the overall responsibility probably lies with the headteacher, but the governors are there to hold the headteacher to account. So, they have a very strong role in making sure that the type of provisions that we are introducing through the school development plans are adhered to.

[201] **Mohammad Asghar:** Will your proposed guidance on cover arrangements include guidance on the safeguarding information that should be provided for temporary cover staff in schools, as well as the arrangements for pre-employment checks that should be carried out?

[202] **Mr Evans:** That guidance exists, but we will be bringing it together in the consolidated guidance.

[203] **Dr Pugh:** The guidance exists now, but it will be brought together in one place.

[204] **Mohammad Asghar:** When?

[205] **Dr Pugh:** September 2014.

[206] **Darren Millar:** Is there a case for driving that more centrally in terms of pre-employment checks rather than having to ask each headteacher to undertake those individual checks and to tick the box to say that they have seen the forms? Can there not be some sort of centrally driven programme where everybody has to be approved in some way before they even get on the list?

[207] **Mr Evans:** Well, they would be on the GTCW lists anyway. It is really a question of whether we want to duplicate something like that.

[208] **Darren Millar:** Right.

[209] **Mohammad Asghar:** I just have another question. Could the three of you, or any one of you, just tell me why our children are not getting the standard of education as children in Ireland, England and Scotland? We are not there.

[210] **Darren Millar:** I think that that is a bigger question than we have the capability to receive an answer for at this point in the meeting. Unfortunately, the clock has beaten us.

[211] If you could relay the additional information that you have indicated that you will be able to pass on to us to support our inquiry, we would appreciate that. Thank you so much for your attendance today. The evidence that you have put on the record has been very interesting. No doubt we will be engaging with you further in the near future. Thank you very much indeed.

10:26

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod**
**Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the
Meeting**

[212] **Darren Millar:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of today's meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

[213] Are there any objections? I can see that there are none, so we will go into private session.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10:26.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10:26.