

National Assembly for Wales
Children and Young People Committee

Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour

August 2013



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

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Children and Young People Committee

The Committee was established on 22 June 2011 with a remit to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing: the education, health and wellbeing of the children and young people of Wales, including their social care.

Current Committee membership



Ann Jones (Chair)
Welsh Labour
Vale of Clwyd



Angela Burns
Welsh Conservatives
Carmarthen West and South
Pembrokeshire



Keith Davies
Welsh Labour
Llanelli



Suzy Davies
Welsh Conservatives
South Wales West



Rebecca Evans
Welsh Labour
Mid and West Wales



Bethan Jenkins
Plaid Cymru
South Wales West



Lynne Neagle
Welsh Labour
Torfaen



David Rees
Welsh Labour
Aberavon



Aled Roberts
Welsh Liberal Democrats
North Wales



Simon Thomas
Plaid Cymru
Mid and West Wales

The following Members were also members of the Committee during this inquiry:



Christine Chapman
Welsh Labour
Cynon Valley



Julie Morgan
Welsh Labour
Cardiff North



Jenny Rathbone
Welsh Labour
Cardiff Central

Contents

The Committee’s Recommendations	7
1. Introduction.....	9
Inquiry Terms of Reference.....	9
Method of Inquiry.....	10
Written Consultation	10
Consultation with Children and Young People.....	10
2. Evidence relevant to both Behaviour and Attendance.....	11
Effectiveness of Existing Strategies	11
Committee View: Effectiveness of Existing Strategies	13
Teacher Training and Development	14
Committee View: Teacher Training and Development.....	16
Roles and Responsibilities	17
Role of Schools	17
Role of Governors	18
Committee View: Role of Governors.....	19
Role of the Regional Consortia	20
Committee View: Role of the Regional Consortia.....	21
Parental engagement.....	22
Children from low income households	22
School Effectiveness Grant and Pupil Deprivation Grant.....	23
Committee View: Children from low income households	24
Other funding issues	25
Delegated school budgets	25
Committee View: Funding.....	27
Early intervention	28
Sharing of Good Practice.	28
Committee View: Good Practice	29
Curriculum.....	30

Committee View: Curriculum	31
3. Attendance	32
Committee View: Attendance	32
School Banding	33
What children and young people told us about attendance	34
Bullying	34
Committee View: Bullying	35
Guidance on school-time absence	36
Use of rewards	36
Welsh Government Codes	37
Transition between primary and secondary school	37
Committee View: Transition between primary and secondary school	39
First-day Response	39
Committee View: First-day Response	40
Education Welfare Service	40
Committee View: Education Welfare Services	41
Fixed-penalty Notices	42
Committee view: Fixed-penalty Notices	42
4. Behaviour	44
Exclusion Statistics	44
What children and young people told us about behaviour	45
Use of Exclusion	45
Unofficial / Illegal Exclusion and 'voluntary withdrawals'	47
'Voluntary withdrawals'	49
Committee View: Unofficial / Illegal exclusion and voluntary withdrawals	50
Managed Moves	50
Committee View: Managed Moves	51
Provision to pupils who are Educated Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) including in Pupil Referral Units (PRU)	51
Home Tuition	53
Pupil Referral Units	54

Committee View: EOTAS Provision	55
Number of hours that should be provided for excluded pupils	56
Committee view: Number of hours that should be provided for excluded pupils	57
Behaviour Support Services	57
School Counselling	58
Support for pupils with Additional Learning Needs	58
Committee view: Additional learning needs	59
Lack of Parental Support for Sanctions	60
Collaborative Working Arrangements	61
Joint-working between relevant agencies	61
Links with other Welsh Government Initiatives	64
Links with the Third Sector	65
Committee View: Links with the Third Sector	66
Committee conclusion: Attendance and behaviour	66
Annex A – Witnesses	68
Annex B – Consultation Responses	70
Annex C – Organisations that participated in Focus Groups	71

The Committee's Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Further to the revised Behaving and Attending Action Plan 2011, the Committee recommends that the Welsh Government develops an overarching national attendance and behaviour strategy which takes forward existing good practice and against which progress is regularly monitored. (Page 14)

Recommendation 2. The Committee recommends that an increased emphasis be placed on evidence-based behaviour management training within initial teacher training. Evidence-based pupil behaviour management modules should also form a core element of continuous professional development. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government works with key stakeholders (including regional consortia) to undertake an audit of need within the existing teaching workforce and to develop action plans to deal with any skills gaps. (Page 17)

Recommendation 3. The Committee recommends that all governors should be provided with training on effective approaches to improve pupil attendance and address problem behaviour. They should also be trained on their roles in this regard and how to understand and utilise school level data to challenge and support their schools to achieve improvement. (Page 20)

Recommendation 4. The Committee recommends that regional consortia should have a more clearly defined role in respect of improving pupil attendance and behaviour. The Welsh Government should further explore the benefits of this approach with specific reference to the other recommendations in this report. (Page 21)

Recommendation 5. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should work with the necessary partners to explore the feasibility of placing the responsibility for the strategic development, oversight of delivery and funding for education welfare and behaviour support services at a regional level. (Page 27)

Recommendation 6. The Welsh Government should ensure that schools, local authorities and regional consortia place an emphasis on early intervention with individual children and families. (Page 28)

Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government should ensure that evidenced-based approaches to improving attendance and addressing problem behaviour are in place and implemented in all Welsh schools. The

potential for a strengthened role for regional consortia in respect of mainstreaming good practice should be explored. (Page 30)

Recommendation 8. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government explores how to utilise any correlation between rates of bullying and non-attendance in schools. (Page 35)

Recommendation 9. The Welsh Government should ensure that there is a clear focus on maintaining and improving attendance rates during the transition between primary and secondary school. The potential for a strengthened role for regional consortia should be explored in this respect. (Page 39)

Recommendation 10. The Welsh Government should review the evidence of how effective the use of 'first day responses' to pupil absences are with a view to issuing strengthened guidance in this regard. (Page 40)

Recommendation 11. Based on the evidence we received, the Committee strongly recommends that the Minister evaluates alternative, more positive strategies to fixed penalty notes before introducing regulations and makes publically available the evidence base for the implementation of fixed penalty notices, should that decision be taken forward. (Page 43)

Recommendation 12. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should work with regional consortia and other key stakeholders to explore the feasibility and benefits of developing and commissioning Educated Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) provision on a regional basis and potentially on an all Wales basis. (Page 55)

The Committee remains concerned over the slow and patchy progress there has been in addressing attendance and behavioural issues despite these issues having been examined and documented by Government and Local Authorities over a number of years. Therefore the Committee intends to revisit this inquiry to monitor progress before the conclusion of this Assembly Term.

1. Introduction

1. The Committee agreed on 22 November 2012 to undertake an inquiry into attendance and behaviour.
2. The overall aim of the inquiry was to review the effectiveness of the Welsh Government's policy and guidance to promote positive behaviour and attendance within education provision for pupils of compulsory school age.

Inquiry Terms of Reference

3. The terms of reference for the inquiry were to examine:
 - Strategies and support in place to address behaviour and attendance for example:
 - Teacher training and development;
 - Provision to pupils who are Educated Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) including in pupil referral units;
 - Use of exclusion (including permanent / fixed term / illegal exclusions);
 - Education Welfare Services;
 - Other general issues such as parental engagement; behaviour support services; the link between food consumed during the school day and behaviour.
 - Support to pupils with additional learning needs in respect of behaviour and attendance;
 - Collaborative working arrangements:
 - Joint working between relevant agencies including, for example, education, social services, health, youth offending teams, police, third sector organisations;
 - Links to other relevant initiatives such as Families First, the School Effectiveness Framework, third sector initiatives.
4. Consultees were also invited to submit any other evidence they felt was directly relevant to the above terms of reference.

Method of Inquiry

Written Consultation

5. The Committee issued a call for evidence on 13 December 2012. Five written submissions were received. The written submissions can be accessed [here](#).¹

6. 16 witnesses were invited to give oral evidence over six meetings. A list of witnesses who provided written and oral evidence for this inquiry can be found at Annex A and B.

Consultation with Children and Young People

7. In addition to the written consultation, the National Assembly's Outreach Team conducted a series of focus groups to seek the views of children and young people on attendance and behaviour.

8. Focus groups were held across Wales and included primary and secondary aged pupils, local authority schemes, third sector organisations and local authority and third sector partnerships. There was a mix of rural and urban settings.

9. The groups included children and young people less likely to have been educated in a formal setting; those affected by attendance and behaviour issues; those who were not in education, employment or training; those with additional learning needs; and minority ethnic children and young people. The Outreach Team worked with faith groups, looked after children, Welsh medium and English medium schools, young people from areas of deprivation and homelessness organisations and parents.

10. 19 focus groups were held, with 17 separate organisations, which included SNAP Cymru; Cardiff Traveller Education Service; and the Amelia Trust Farm. In total, there were 181 participants aged between 9 years old and 23 years old. A full list of the organisations that took part in the focus groups can be found at Annex C.

11. A summary of the main findings of this work can be found on pages 34 and 45.

¹ <http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=5218>

2. Evidence relevant to both Behaviour and Attendance

Effectiveness of Existing Strategies

12. Since 2008, the following are the most relevant overarching developments that have set out to improve attendance and behaviour:

- National Review of Behaviour and Attendance (NBAR) 2008:² Chaired by Professor Ken Reid, the report included 19 core recommendations and 73 supporting recommendations.
- Welsh Government's Behaving and Attending Action Plan 2009: In response to NBAR, the Welsh Government published the Behaving and Attending Action Plan in March 2009.
- Revised Welsh Government Behaving and Attending Action Plan 2011: Making a Difference on Behaviour and Attendance, An Action Plan for 2011-2013 has three focused actions: training and development; standards and accountability; and a holistic approach to individual support and additional learning needs (ALN).
- Welsh Government National Implementation Plan on Improving Schools states that the implementation of the most recent behaviour and attendance action plan has focused mainly on the development of an Analysis Framework, for use by local authorities.

13. In his written evidence to the Committee, Professor Ken Reid made a range of points in relation to NBAR, including:

- "the speed of implementation, after a promising start, has been a major disappointment to me";
- "the initial advantage which the Welsh Government benefitted from through the NBAR process has once again been lost";
- "I would suggest that a second NBAR Review is now required and necessary both to update and to develop new strategies."

14. In his oral evidence, Professor Reid stated the need for one coherent attendance and behaviour strategy for Wales rather than 22 different plans and strategies at a local authority level.

² Welsh Government commissioned report, [National Behaviour and Attendance Review](#), published 2008

15. The teaching unions drew attention to the increasing number of plans and schemes established in the last few years. In gathering their evidence NAHT Cymru / ASCL stated:

“What we found could not be described as a consistent, national plan of action as envisaged by Professor Reid however. Many school interventions are effective and sharing these would be beneficial; other policy decisions and local factors are less helpful.”³

16. In their written evidence, UCAC told the Committee:

“Over the past few years, several documents have been published, several steering groups have been appointed and several pilot schemes have been established and implemented with regard to attendance both on a county-wide basis and nationally. Many of the documents are repetitive and full of rhetoric, and have failed to successfully identify or get to grips with day-to-day situations in everyday language.”⁴

17. Whilst David Evans, NUT Cymru, said:

“The fact that there have been three separate plans over five years and the fact that we are here today discussing this again indicates that they are not working at this moment in time. Our members are not reporting back to us about any real improvement in behaviour. There have been some changes, there have been some better strategies and there have been some subtle differences, but, unfortunately, from our members’ point of view, the changes have been subtle and more needs to be looked at.”⁵

18. In his evidence, Professor Ken Reid emphasised the importance of Wales not being left behind other countries in terms of attendance. He told the Committee about a multi-million pound investment programme in education that had been announced in New York, which would result in nearly 100 people (50 equivalent education welfare officers and 50 other staff) specifically to improve attendance. He then went on to say:

³ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p5), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from NAHT Cymru and ASCL Cymru, 31 January 2013

⁴ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p4), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from UCAC, 31 January 2013

⁵ RoP [para 14], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

“In Europe, once again, as with PISA, Finland is right at the top. What are they doing right? First of all, they do not have the same numbers of disadvantaged pupils that we have. They do not have as many pupils from deprived backgrounds or pupils with special educational needs. Wales has a much harder job than many countries to catch up.”⁶

Committee View: Effectiveness of Existing Strategies

19. The Committee welcomes the Welsh Government’s focus on attendance and behaviour in recent years. Whilst there have been numerous strategies, policies and action plans published by the Welsh Government since the report of the National Attendance and Behaviour Review in 2008, there is not a consistent national plan of action in place. The evidence we have heard suggests there are areas where clearly more needs to be done, for example, in ensuring that all teachers are supported to effectively deal with problem behaviour through their initial training and on-going professional development. The evidence also highlights that the ways in which the education landscape is changing, in terms of an expanding role for the regional consortia and increased school funding delegation rates, will inevitably impact on how further efforts to improve pupil attendance and behaviour need to be shaped. All these issues are further detailed later in this report.

20. The evidence on good practice in tackling poor attendance and problem behaviour is also referred to later in this report. The Committee is disappointed to hear that such good practice is not being shared to the extent it needs to be. We have heard that there is inconsistency across and within local authorities and significant variation between schools. Whilst we are not advocating that ‘one size fits all’, good practice which has shown to deliver improved outcomes for children, such as the strategy being implemented across Ceredigion, is clearly not being shared widely enough. We also note the significant variation between local authorities in rates of permanent and fixed term exclusions.⁷ Within this context, the Committee was interested in Professor Reid’s evidence, which pointed to the need for one coherent attendance and behaviour strategy for Wales rather than 22 different strategies at a local authority level. We regard the increasing

⁶ RoP [para 38], 17 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

⁷ Statistical First Release, [Exclusions from schools in Wales 2011/12](#), Welsh Government, 26 February 2013

emphasis on the regional consortia as a way in which some of the current inconsistencies might be tackled. This is a recurring theme in this report.

21. Whilst scrutinising the effectiveness of Welsh Government policy during this inquiry, the Committee has been mindful of the needs and experiences of individual children. We were keen to understand the reasons why some children have difficulties maintaining good attendance levels and why some children's behaviour in school might lead to their exclusion and might also affect the lives of other pupils and teachers. A focus on the welfare of pupils is crucial, for example in maintaining an emphasis on reintegrating into the mainstream those pupils who for period of time received their education outside school. Our views on other aspects of pupil wellbeing such as the importance of education welfare and behaviour support services and the need for excluded children to receive their full education entitlement are set out later in this report. Within the context of pupil wellbeing, the Committee is very concerned about the impact on individual children where Welsh Government policy is not being properly implemented.

Further to the revised Behaving and Attending Action Plan 2011, the Committee recommends that the Welsh Government develops an overarching national attendance and behaviour strategy which takes forward existing good practice and against which progress is regularly monitored.

Teacher Training and Development

22. The Welsh Government action plan, developed in March 2011, Making a Difference on Behaviour and Attendance, An Action Plan for 2011-2013 had three focused actions, the first of which was training and development. In this plan, the Welsh Government stated its intention to:

- develop training modules on behaviour management and attendance to be delivered through Initial Teacher Training, Induction and Continuing Professional Development (from the start of 2012-13);
- fund training in well-evaluated behaviour management programmes.

23. In their evidence, Estyn said that:

“Lack of staff commitment to improving behaviour and attendance is a key barrier to overcome in tackling issues of poverty and disadvantage. Staff training and development are needed to tackle this issue. Most successful schools invest significantly in developing

the skills of leaders, teachers, support staff and governors to improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners.”⁸

24. In his written evidence Professor Reid stated:

“Initial teacher training is notoriously poor at providing new teachers with the skills they require for managing both behaviour and attendance. In fact, on school attendance, most trainees receive no induction in this area apart from any practical tips which they may pick up whilst on teaching practice. This is and always has been a weakness in existing ITT provision.”⁹

25. He went on to say:

“[...] some of the so-called ‘information’ provided to trainees on behaviour management is of dubious quality and usefulness. This is one of the longstanding weaknesses of ITT provision as most newly qualified teachers (NQT’s) tend to learn ‘on-the-job’ through experience gained whilst in full-time employment.”¹⁰

26. Professor Reid stated that the evidence gathering for NBAR found that the ‘lack of training on behaviour management’ was the ‘number one concern’ of teaching and caring professionals and that this ‘applied universally from the grass roots (eg teaching assistants) right up to head teacher level’.

27. The NBAR report recommended that:

“The Welsh Assembly Government should prioritise and increase funding significantly for training programmes on behaviour and attendance not only for school-based staff but for all those professionals and local authority staff engaged in promoting positive behaviour and improving attendance, more especially the education welfare/education social work staff.”¹¹

28. However, in his written evidence, Professor Reid stated that:

⁸ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-02-13(p1a), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Estyn, 21 February 2013

⁹ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-02-13(p1a), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Professor Ken Reid, 17 January 2013

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Welsh Government commissioned report, [National Behaviour and Attendance Review](#), published 2008

“[...] progress on implementing the NBAR recommendation on providing appropriate training for all staff engaged in behavioural and school attendance work has been painfully slow and disappointing. In fact, almost five years later, most staff in Wales remain in a similar position to the one outlined in both the NBAR (2008) final and interim (2007) reports and in the SYCA (2007) evidence.”¹²

29. Teacher training and development was also highlighted as a concern by the teaching unions. NASUWT told the Committee that they did not believe the training student teachers received adequately equipped them to deal with the behavioural problems they might encounter, whilst ATL Cymru felt that greater emphasis should be placed on behaviour management in initial teacher training (ITT).

30. In his response, the Minister for Education and Skills told the Committee:

“If teachers do not have the skills to deal with bad behaviour, I wonder what the point of initial teacher training is. I would assume that it should be dealt with right at the outset. That is why I am reviewing initial teacher training, to see if it is fit for purpose at the present time. Clearly, we have addressed behaviour within the programme of study for the Masters in educational practice that we have introduced, and we have invested additional resources in training in this area. We invested an additional £0.5 million and trained 3,600 teachers as a result.”¹³

Committee View: Teacher Training and Development

31. Despite the Welsh Government investment to date, the evidence clearly highlights concerns that some teachers are still not sufficiently trained and supported to deal effectively with problem behaviour. In October 2012, the Welsh Government commissioned a review of initial teacher training to determine whether its current content and approaches continue to meet the needs of teachers in Wales. The review was due to be completed in May 2013 and report in July 2013.¹⁴

¹² Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-02-13(p1a), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Professor Ken Reid, 17 January 2013

¹³ RoP [para 339], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

¹⁴ Minister for Education and Skills, answer to WAQ64589, 26 April 2013

32. The Committee also believes that all schools must have a clear ‘systems approach’ to deal with problem behaviour in order that pupils and their parents / carers are clear about the consequences of behaviour. Such ‘in school systems’ could also support the development of more consistent approaches across the year groups. Well trained teachers supported by a systematic approach within schools have the potential to significantly improve the school experience for all pupils. Similarly, the Committee wishes to emphasise the importance of school leaders being provided with appropriate on-going training for them to support the teaching staff and to fulfil their responsibilities and drive forward the necessary changes in this respect.

33. The Committee was also struck by the findings of the University of Edinburgh research which found that training for teachers tended to focus primarily on legal requirements and often did not include a focus on, for example, how to prevent exclusion or on how young people and their families were authentically involved in the process. The research also found that in respect of Educated Otherwise than at School provision (EOTAS) there were ‘serious concerns’ in respect of the provision of training and approaches to behaviour management for staff; that ‘there is no shared or commonly agreed emphasis on a preventative approach to disciplinary problems’; and that ‘there was no priority given to positive ethos or climate building’.

The Committee recommends that an increased emphasis be placed on evidence-based behaviour management training within initial teacher training. Evidence-based pupil behaviour management modules should also form a core element of continuous professional development. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government works with key stakeholders (including regional consortia) to undertake an audit of need within the existing teaching workforce and to develop action plans to deal with any skills gaps.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Schools

34. The NBAR report highlighted the importance of having a whole-school approach, supported by strong leadership.

35. In his written evidence, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales also referred to the importance of having a whole-school approach and an

emphasis on pupil wellbeing to improve school attendance and behaviour. He stated:

“There is strong evidence to support the validity of a whole-school approach with a clear focus on pupil wellbeing where pupils feel listened to and valued as the best solution to the issues raised through the NBAR enquiry. There is a clear need to support schools in the adoption of evidenced whole-school approaches.”¹⁵

36. Whilst Professor David Egan told the Committee:

“Fundamentally, what the Sutton Trust points to is that our most effective schools have excellent leadership, and know exactly what to do in terms of the learning and teaching strategies to engage young people, particularly those who might easily become disengaged, and therefore their attendance and behaviour becomes a problem...” and

“We have known for a long time that our most effective schools – the most outstanding schools – are also the places where you tend to get the highest levels of attendance and the best behaviour.”¹⁶

Role of Governors

37. In November 2012, the Minister for Education and Skills issued a written statement in which he announced the establishment of a task and finish group to review the roles and responsibilities in relation to school governance.¹⁷ He said:

“The purpose of the task group is to consider the current school governance framework and whether it is fit for purpose. In particular the group will consider the split of responsibilities between the different components of the system including school governing bodies and local authorities, whether this should be revised so as to redistribute responsibility, and the nature and extent of support which should be provided to governing bodies and others to help them discharge their duties.”

38. In their written evidence, Governors Wales said:

¹⁵ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-05-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 6 February 2013

¹⁶ RoP [para 12], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

¹⁷ [Welsh Government Written Statement](#), *Task and Finish Group to review the roles and responsibilities in relation to school governance*, November 2012

“In accordance with Section 88 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 governing bodies must ensure ‘that policies designed to promote good behaviour and discipline on the part of its pupils are pursued at the school’. In particular, it also requires governing bodies to:

“(a) ... make, and from time to time review, a written statement of general principles to which the head teacher is to have regard in determining any measures under section 89(1), and

(b) where they consider it desirable that any particular measures should be so determined by the head teacher or that he should have regard to any particular matters—

(i) shall notify him of those measures or matters, and

(ii) may give him such guidance as they consider appropriate.”¹⁸

39. They went on to say:

“The National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) report published in 2008 comments that ‘the governing body of a school should be actively engaged in the development of the school’s behaviour policy...’”¹⁹

and gave examples of specific roles governors may play, such as those associated with establishing committees to look at behaviour and attendance and review strategies and using link governors with specific responsibility for attendance and behaviour or for pupil participation.

40. However, in oral evidence, Hugh Pattrick told the Committee:

“How governing bodies and schools address the challenge of attendance varies considerably from school to school.”²⁰

Committee View: Role of Governors

41. The Committee recognises the wide range of roles and responsibilities placed upon governors. We look forward with interest to further developments in respect of the review of school governance and anticipate

¹⁸ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-09-13(p3), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Governors Wales, 13 March 2013

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ RoP [para 114], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

that, in considering any future changes, the Minister will carefully review where the role of governors can be strengthened in respect of increasing attendance rates and supporting a whole-school approach to improving pupil behaviour. We note that the University of Edinburgh research states that ‘training for governors and particularly for members of pupil discipline committees should ensure they understand equality issues, children’s rights, the social context of exclusion and strategies to avoid exclusion’. We also note that Estyn’s Annual Report 2011-12 found that ‘governors need to develop more expertise and to be more challenging’. Whilst many governors make use of performance data, in three-in-ten schools, governors do not use this information to challenge the school about the standards it achieves.

The Committee recommends that all governors should be provided with training on effective approaches to improve pupil attendance and address problem behaviour. They should also be trained on their roles in this regard and how to understand and utilise school level data to challenge and support their schools to achieve improvement.

Role of the Regional Consortia

42. On 18 February 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills issued a decision report: Funding to deliver improvements in school attendance.²¹ This stated that the Welsh Government would support local authorities to improve attendance in primary and secondary schools by providing them with grant funding on a consortia basis for use in academic year 2012/13 and 2013/14 on activity targeted to deliver improvements in school attendance.

43. In the decision report, the Minister stated:

“Over the past 18 months the main work on attendance and behaviour has focused on the development of an Attendance and Behaviour Analysis Framework for use by local authorities. The Framework sets out a standardised approach to attendance and behaviour data analysis and is intended to identify systematic problems in schools and local authorities. The analysis provided to local authorities contains a ‘traffic light’ assessment of their performance when compared with other schools and authorities in Wales.”

²¹ Welsh Government Decision Report, [Funding to deliver improvements in school attendance](#), February 2013

44. In a Welsh Government news article²² of 27 February 2013, the Minister stated that £800,000 would be made available during the current and next academic year. The new grant funding would be made available over two financial years, with £200,000 to be divided amongst the four consortia in 2012/13 and £600,000 in 2013/14. Consortia will have to submit costed proposals to the Welsh Government, outlining the action that they intend to take to secure continued, long-term improvements in school attendance.

45. In his written evidence the Minister stated:

“This will be the first opportunity for consortia to work directly and jointly on attendance. Historically, this issue has been dealt with at a local authority level.”²³

46. On 18 June 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills made a statement on the ‘Future Delivery of Education Services in Wales’ and launched a 12-week consultation. The options for which comments are being sought include cutting the number of local authority education services by a third by April 2014 and strengthening the role of regional consortia in a range of areas, including school improvement. The proposals put forward in the Minister’s consultation may have a bearing on the recommendations we have made in respect of attendance and behaviour, but it is too early to say at the date this report is being published.

Committee View: Role of the Regional Consortia

47. The Committee is clear that the evidence we have heard shows the need for a more consistent approach across schools and authorities in respect of improving pupil attendance and behaviour. A significant emphasis also needs to be placed on ensuring that school leaders know ‘what works’ in respect of improving attendance and behaviour. It is disappointing, yet again, for the Committee to hear that good practice is not being shared to the extent it needs to be. In respect of pupil attendance and behaviour, regional consortia have the potential to provide the most appropriate driver for delivering this change.

The Committee recommends that regional consortia should have a more clearly defined role in respect of improving pupil attendance and behaviour. The Welsh Government should further explore the benefits of

²² Welsh Government news release: [New £800,000 fund to build on improving school attendance](#), 27 February 2013

²³ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-09-13(p4), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from the Minister for Education and Skills, 13 March 2013

this approach with specific reference to the other recommendations in this report.

Parental engagement

48. Many of the teaching unions highlighted difficulties in engaging parents. In their evidence, NUT Cymru talked of a “small but growing minority of parents who do not share the values of the school and are unwilling to support them.” ATL Cymru also said that their members had reported varying levels of parental engagement and support in disciplinary issues and that “such attitudes are not confined by any means to schools in more deprived areas: some articulate and well educated parents can make no secret of their disdain for certain members of staff, or their personal assessment of matters of school dress or other codes.”

49. In his evidence, Professor David Egan drew attention to recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children that suggested far more could be done to see schools working more closely with parents, families and communities to address attendance, behaviour and achievement. He said:

“[...] it has to be an attitude that comes, first and foremost, from the school: that parents and families are important, and that wanting to engage parents is absolutely critical to the success of the school...”²⁴
and,

“All the research shows that we do not have all these feckless parents out there in our most disadvantaged communities who do not care about their children and do not care about education. That is an urban myth. The evidence is clear that those communities and those parents care deeply about their children and their education. Whether they are always engaged sufficiently in the process [...] is another matter.”²⁵

Children from low income households

50. A number of witnesses drew attention to the link between attendance, behaviour and deprivation. In their written evidence, Estyn argued that it is often poverty and disadvantage that underlie the more serious attendance and behaviour issues in our schools and in the education system more

²⁴ RoP [para 16], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

²⁵ RoP [para 80], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

generally. This is a view supported by Professor David Egan, who told the Committee:

“There is a clear pattern when you look at free school meal students. It picks up in primary and becomes really prevalent in secondary; often, problems around behaviour, exclusion and attendance are particularly concentrated within those groups.”²⁶

51. Whilst in their written evidence, ATL Cymru urged the Committee to give serious consideration to the link between poverty and poor educational outcomes.

School Effectiveness Grant and Pupil Deprivation Grant

52. The School Effectiveness Grant (SEG) and the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) are the Welsh Government’s principal means of providing financial support for their three national priorities for schools:

- improving standards in literacy;
- improving standards in numeracy, and
- reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment.

53. Professor David Egan suggested that the school effectiveness grant and the pupil deprivation grant were providing opportunities for schools to work more closely with their communities.

54. In their written evidence, NAHT Cymru/ASCL Cymru also stated:

“Members report that the pupil deprivation grant (PDG) and the school effectiveness grant (SEG) have been a particularly important contributor to increased attendance rates. As Professor Ken Reid points out, absenteeism affects pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds disproportionately; the pupil deprivation grant is of course specifically targeted at this group of pupils. One school whose percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is nearly 50% has reported a dramatic improvement (2011/2012: 88.1%; 2012/2013: 93.2%) in attendance figures, a drop in exclusion rates and an overall improvement in behaviour. The school used the PDG and SEG to employ additional support staff to implement intervention strategies for literacy, numeracy and emotional / nurture issues;

²⁶ RoP [para 4], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

some of the funding has been used to buy resources to run enriched curriculum and after school activities.”²⁷

55. However, the Committee heard concerns that some of these pupil deprivation grants were being spent on the more general problem rather than the pupil deprivation grant being targeted at children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In response to this, the Minister for Education and Skills said:

“We are completing, if I remember rightly, the first year of the pupil deprivation grant in terms of the financial year. So, it is still relatively early to track progress in the use of that money. I do not think that we have a comprehensive survey of the way in which that has been undertaken yet. Clearly, we have expectations of local authorities in terms of the way that that money is used and we will want to review that; if we find evidence, we may well need to target it or to tighten the guidance. In respect of the evidence that you have had from the unions of successful practice, that is good to hear and it may be that we will want to incorporate that in future guidance.”²⁸

56. The current Welsh Government guidance on the Pupil Deprivation Grant (published in April 2013) stresses that it is important that schools note that their spending plans will reflect the expectation that the Pupil Deprivation Grants is used for targeted interventions to support pupils from deprived areas and not for more general actions, which may be considered under the School Effectiveness Grant.

Committee View: Children from low income households

57. Pupils need to have high levels of attendance in order to achieve their full potential. Additionally, the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) needs to be effectively targeted in order to ensure it improves outcomes for pupils from low income households. On 21 June 2013, this Committee launched a consultation on the effectiveness of Welsh Government policy and strategy in mitigating the link between poverty and educational outcomes. We anticipate taking further evidence on the link between poverty and attendance and behaviour during the course of the inquiry and also further examining issues relating to the PDG.

²⁷ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p5), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from NAHT Cymru and ASCL Cymru, 31 January 2013

²⁸ RoP [para 265], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

Other funding issues

58. The Committee heard evidence from the teacher and head teacher unions that some of the projects that they regard as good practice examples in improving attendance and behaviour are not able to be replicated and may not be sustainable because of the time-limited grant funding by which they are financed.

59. Rolant Wynne, UCAC, told the Committee:

“A lot of schemes have been put into practice over the last five years. This has led to an improvement in small pockets. We have found that the resources of authorities may have been concentrated on those projects at the expense of schools in general. Successful schemes have been implemented, for example, multi-agency working, but that is at the expense of multi-agency input in other schools. In addition, a lot of schemes have been implemented, but they are unsustainable. Therefore, even though the statistics and the reports state that multi-agency work is leading to significant improvement in attendance and, perhaps, behaviour, the truth is that the resources are not available to maintain a service at the same level across schools, and there will not be a change in the national statistics unless the same service is offered.”²⁹

60. Whilst Caroline Rawson, SNAP Cymru, told the Committee:

“[...] very often, schools feel that they do not have enough money to put in the additional time and support that is required for a challenging young person.”³⁰

Delegated school budgets

61. In 2010, in response to the Front Line Resources Review, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) stated that:

“local authorities have agreed to increase school funding delegation rates from the current Wales average of 75% to 80% with the intention of reaching 85% within 4 years.”

²⁹ RoP [para 16], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

³⁰ RoP [para 268], 21 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

62. Although the Minister had not set the specific target of 85%, press coverage at the time stated that the Minister was “pleased with the WLGA’s response”, stating:

“It’s the start, I hope, of getting more money to the frontline in Wales.”

63. The Committee has heard from several witnesses about the impact of the move to delegated budgets on the ability of local authorities to provide central support services including Education Welfare Officer provision.

64. City and County of Swansea told the Committee that the shift of resourcing to schools is impacting on the authority’s ability to fund support services such as welfare services and oversight for exclusions and admissions. They said that the local authority’s capacity to deal with attendance and behaviour was under threat and pressure. Whilst Ceredigion Council said that the authority had put specific lines in school budgets for seclusion and nurture units in each secondary school it could be extremely challenging for local authorities to deliver their responsibilities because schools had the right to manage their budgets as they saw fit.

65. A number of the teaching unions also raised concerns around delegated budgets. Hugh Davies, NAHT Cymru, said:

“[...] another thing that we face at the moment is that, with increased delegation of funding to schools, and after the school funding guarantee ends in 2015, the budgets for education are likely to be hit quite severely along with other council services across Wales.”³¹

66. He also suggested that, even though it appeared that schools were now having more delegated funding, the reality was that core services were being cut back and schools were having to purchase them instead, sometimes at greater cost. So the increased delegation was quite often illusory.

67. In response, the Minister for Education and Skills said:

“People are contradictory, are they not? Everybody wants more money to go into schools, and what I have done over the last few years is direct more money into schools and force local authorities to give more of their money to schools. This has been a consistent demand year on year. I, as a Minister, have taken that forward and found a mechanism for doing that, first, by getting an agreement from the

³¹ RoP [para 165], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

WLGA to move to 80% by September 2012, and now 85% of budgets by September 2014. I guess, in a time of austerity, it is inevitable that you will get some push-back on that from local authorities.”³²

“There is a valid underpinning issue about what can be done in some of these areas at a school level, as distinct from, say, a consortium level, or even a cluster level. It is probably right that there are certain services that can only be provided collectively if they have the necessary scale of activity. However, people have to be sensible about this and they have to work out what works in their areas. It might be that, from within the delegated moneys, schools decide to buy back services from local authorities and there is a trade-off there. What we are trying to do, however, is empower the schools with the resource, so that they can ensure that they get services that are fit for purpose; not services that are just provided but do not actually meet the needs of the school.”³³

Committee View: Funding

68. The Committee is concerned to hear evidence that a consequence of further delegating funding to schools is the impact on authorities’ ability to fund support services such as welfare services and oversight for exclusions. In the context of increased delegated funding, we anticipate that unless school leaders are directed to commission and fund quality services to support staff and pupils in respect of behaviour and attendance, there is significant risk that such services will not be provided. The Committee is of the clear view that adequately funded education welfare services and behaviour support services are essential. The Welsh Government will not achieve its aims of reducing the attainment gap for children from low income households unless such services can provide support when needed.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should work with the necessary partners to explore the feasibility of placing the responsibility for the strategic development, oversight of delivery and funding for education welfare and behaviour support services at a regional level.

³² RoP [para 260], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

³³ RoP [para 261], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

Early intervention

69. Much of the evidence has emphasised the need for early intervention with individual children and families in terms of dealing with any decline in the levels of attendance and behaviour. Professor Ken Reid highlighted this as one of the key findings in NBAR. He told the Committee:

“[...] we have to prevent and address the particular issues, not just deal with them when they get to the more significant end of the problems when pupils are aged 14, 15 and 16.”³⁴

70. In their written evidence, YMCA Wales said that early intervention was a cost-effective approach both for the individual child and also in terms of reducing potential future worklessness and costs of dealing with young people through, for example, the criminal justice system.

71. While NUT Cymru told us that, in order to improve attendance at compulsory school age, the work needs to be done before pupils start school, through playgroups, crèches, health visitor clinics, local play workers and teachers employed by local authorities to promote positive attitudes towards school and education.

72. The Minister for Education and Skills said that he was satisfied that the Welsh Government’s approach places enough emphasis on early intervention, “but whether that is followed through at local authority level is another matter.”³⁵

The Welsh Government should ensure that schools, local authorities and regional consortia place an emphasis on early intervention with individual children and families.

Sharing of Good Practice.

73. The Committee heard many examples of good practice during the course of the inquiry. In their written evidence, Ceredigion stated:

“Ceredigion Local Authority has funded the set-up of Hafan (nurture) and Encil (seclusion) centres in every secondary school. These are very effective in maintaining and supporting pupils who feel vulnerable, lose interest in their education, are at risk of being excluded or are vulnerable due to family or social problems. They

³⁴ RoP [para 56], 17 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

³⁵ RoP [para 242], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

offer education programmes and support that has been tailored to meet the needs of pupils who require help to improve/support their learning, behaviour, attendance or attitude towards education.”³⁶

74. Whilst in his written evidence, the Children’s Commissioner highlighted examples of schools he had visited, including a school that made emotional wellbeing a priority and a school that had developed a whole-school approach to Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL).

75. However, it seemed that this good practice was not being rolled out across Wales. Ann Keane, Estyn, told the Committee:

“We know what good practice looks like in literacy and in relation to poverty, but the issue is how to ensure that other schools roll out that good practice. It is, in part, a matter of commitment and accepting that moral imperative, but it is also a matter of joining up initiatives and ensuring the regional consortia and school improvement and education welfare officers are on board in delivering that. That requires some sort of strategic approach at a national level.”³⁷

“I would like to see partnerships between schools, as well as an infrastructure that maintains those partnerships so that best practice can be shared. It is slightly ad hoc at present, and we need more co-ordination between schools, in order to share best practice.”³⁸

76. Whilst the Minister for Education and Skills said:

“What I am not clear about is why local authorities have been unable to learn from the best practice that is already out there. That seems to me an extraordinary deficiency. That is their responsibility. It is the responsibility of directors of education and directors of children’s services to get this right. The evidence that comes to us is that they are not.”³⁹

Committee View: Good Practice

77. As stated above, the Committee is disappointed, yet again, to hear that good practice is not being shared to the extent it needs to be. Regional

³⁶ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-07-13(p2), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from the Ceredigion County Council, 27 February 2013

³⁷ RoP [para 155], 21 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

³⁸ RoP [para 203], 21 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

³⁹ RoP [para 249], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

consortia have the potential to play a pivotal role in ensuring that good practice and evidence-based approaches are clearly understood by schools, Directors of Education and local authorities within their region.

The Welsh Government should ensure that evidenced-based approaches to improving attendance and addressing problem behaviour are in place and implemented in all Welsh schools. The potential for a strengthened role for regional consortia in respect of mainstreaming good practice should be explored.

Curriculum

78. During the Outreach Team's work with children and young people, several groups highlighted a common theme relating to lessons and schoolwork. We received evidence from some children and young people that lessons were boring and the work was too difficult. In response to a question asking what should be done to help more children to attend school, the greatest response related to school lessons, with most groups suggesting that lessons should be more fun or lively. Groups also said that there should be more practical lessons and more off-school site activities.

79. Rex Phillips, NASUWT, agreed that outdoor education could play a major role in improving attendance and behaviour in mainstream schools. He told the Committee:

“As a teacher who meets ex-pupils, who, perhaps, were not very well-behaved when they were in school, what they do remember are the experiences that they had when they went to outdoor study centres and the challenges that they faced in that sort of environment. Regrettably, we saw the demise of outdoor study centres across Wales.”⁴⁰

80. In their written evidence, Governors Wales said:

“Curriculum and teaching and learning issues for pupils are very important in tackling behaviour and attendance concerns. Pupils who are performing well are less likely to be absent or misbehave. The balance of responses in relation to behaviour and attendance should be about pupils being successful and therefore being rewarded for their compliance.

⁴⁰ RoP [para 62], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

“If there is too much national and local emphasis on pupils’ and schools’ achievements at key academic benchmarks which, by definition, all learners may not be able to achieve; this could potentially distance some learners. The curriculum, particularly, but not only, at 14-19 needs to offer learners the opportunity to engage fully and to achieve their potential, via a variety of subject choices, both academic and vocational.”⁴¹

81. In response, the Minister for Education and Skills said:

“I do not apologise for challenging work in schools, but, clearly, I do not want lessons to be boring...”⁴²

82. And went on to say:

“[...] if young people have the appropriate literacy and numeracy skills for their age—and most of them are capable of that—then that will help in terms of their engagement with the curriculum further downfield, and it will have an impact on attendance and behaviour.”⁴³

Committee View: Curriculum

83. It is clear that schools can benefit from listening and responding to the views of children and young people (where this is possible). In turn, pupils are more likely to attend and behave positively in school.

84. We anticipate that the Minister will seek the views of children and young people in the forthcoming review of the national curriculum. Schools must also continue to listen to the views of all pupils through mechanisms, such as school councils. Where needed, schools must also strive to find new and innovative ways in which to engage with a wide range of pupils in respect of how they can best be engaged in their own learning.

⁴¹ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-09-13(p3), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Governor’s Wales, 13 March 2013

⁴² RoP [para 238], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

⁴³ RoP [para 310], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

3. Attendance

85. Overall absenteeism has been stable from 2006/07 to 2010/11, and dropped 0.5% in 2011/12. Unauthorised absence has been stable at between 0.6 and 1.0% of sessions since 2002/03.

86. The most recently published absenteeism statistics showed that during the autumn and spring terms of 2011/2012, the rate of overall absenteeism from maintained primary schools was 1.5% higher in Wales than in England, while the rates of unauthorised absenteeism were the same.⁴⁴ Comparative statistics for absenteeism from maintained secondary schools are not published.

87. Ann Keane, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training, Estyn, told the Committee:

“Last year, one in three secondary schools and one in six primary schools had attendance percentages that were not adequate. If you look at the figures for England, you will see that we are still behind in terms of absenteeism in the primary and secondary sectors. Therefore, although the trends are upwards, we are not content with where we currently sit in terms of attendance.”⁴⁵

88. In written evidence, the Minister for Education stated:

“Attendance rates in both primary and secondary schools are now at their highest levels since the Welsh Government first started collecting the data.”⁴⁶

Committee View: Attendance

89. The Committee welcomes the fact that attendance rates in both primary and secondary have improved. The Committee echoes the views of the Chief Inspector of Schools, Ann Keane that, although the trends are upwards, more needs to be done.

⁴⁴ Welsh Government Statistical, [Absenteeism from Primary Schools 2011/2012](#), 22 January 2013

⁴⁵ RoP [para 200], 21 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

⁴⁶ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-09-13(p4), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Minister for Education and Skills, 13 March 2013

School Banding

90. In his written evidence, the Minister stated:

“It is clear the inclusion of attendance data as part of school banding has had a positive impact. In 2011/12 the secondary school attendance rate improved by 0.8% on the previous year. This is the largest single year on year improvement seen over the past seven years.”⁴⁷

91. Much of the evidence presented to the Committee suggests that the inclusion of attendance in school banding has been a driver for schools to place more emphasis on improving pupil absences, although some concern has been raised about the consistency and reliability of the data being collected. In their written evidence, NAHT Cymru and ASCL Cymru said,

“...we believe however that this too may lack national consistency because some doubt remains whether all schools and local authorities report absences to a common format. Until this is resolved, a reliable all-Wales picture will be difficult to achieve.”⁴⁸

92. In their oral evidence, Ceredigion County Council highlighted that in the banding system, the level 2 threshold is given a different weighting to attendance rates. They went on to say that the national priorities are literacy and numeracy on the one hand and attendance and behaviour on the other, and that they should be acknowledged with the same status.

93. In response, the Minister for Education and Skills said:

“I do not agree with that. It is important that attendance is an element within the banding, but improved attendance is one of the factors that contribute to improved school performance and the whole point of banding is to ensure that we are monitoring the improvement of schools. [...] I think that we have had the necessary push as a result of including attendance. I am not sure that we would get much more if we increased the weighting within the overall banding framework.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-09-13(p4), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Minister for Education and Skills, 13 March 2013

⁴⁸ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p5), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from NAHT Cymru and ASCL Cymru, 31 January 2013

⁴⁹ RoP [para 270], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

What children and young people told us about attendance

94. In our consultation with children and young people, the most common reasons given for non-attendance were bullying and a lack of desire to attend school: either not wanting to attend or wanting to do other things with friends. The next most common theme related to lessons and schoolwork: some pupils found lessons boring and said that the work was too difficult. A few groups suggested that failure to complete homework was also a reason for non-attendance.

95. Several groups highlighted issues to do with parents and home-life. These included parents not ensuring attendance, having a difficult home-life and having caring responsibilities. A number of the groups suggested issues relating to teachers: pupils may not like individual teachers, there could be tensions between them and pupils, a lack of trust or a feeling of a lack of interest by teachers.

96. Some groups identified issues relating to Additional Learning Needs. These included feelings of isolation, and a lack of understanding of Additional Learning Needs. Other reasons identified by individual groups included drugs, a need to go to work and the early start of the school day.

97. In response to what would encourage better attendance, the greatest number of responses related to lessons being more fun, with more variety, more free time and extra-curricular activities. There were also a number of responses relating to teachers and teaching styles. A few groups also suggested that there should be more equal treatment and that there should be recognition of pupils as individuals with more empathy and understanding needed, more dialogue and more consultation with pupils.

Bullying

98. Bullying is often cited as a reason for non-attendance. Barnardo's Cymru told the Committee that bullying frequently goes unrecognised, that teachers are often unable to stop it and that it is often very difficult for a child or young person to feel confident enough to report it to a teacher.

99. Professor Ken Reid said:

“If you look at the causes of school attendance and at my latest, recently published research on this matter, it shows, for example,

that bullying, and particularly cyberbullying, is one of the most significant causes of school absenteeism.”⁵⁰

100. In their written evidence, Barnardo’s Cymru said that “there is no statutory obligation on schools or local authorities to monitor or record bullying.”⁵¹

101. The Minister for Education and Skills told the Committee that very full guidance on bullying, which covered a range of areas of bullying, had been produced 18 months previously. He said:

“There is great clarity and leadership on a national level. Bullying will always be a challenge in educational settings. Again, a lot of this comes down to best practice and the engagement of young people. We have had good examples through organisations like SNAP Cymru, which has taken up such issues. Recent material that it has developed includes its Wmff! app, for example. I have seen specific examples of good work in particular schools. The testimony of young people themselves in this field is very important, and we must ensure that they are engaged in this process.”⁵²

Committee View: Bullying

102. The Committee welcomes the Welsh Government’s development of a series of anti-bullying materials intended to provide detailed guidance and practical solutions with the aim of preventing and responding to incidents of bullying in schools. The Committee also notes that the Welsh Government has previously commissioned all-Wales surveys in respect of the prevalence of bullying. The Committee was, however, concerned to note from the evidence we received that there is no statutory obligation on schools or local authorities to monitor or record bullying. Accurate school level data on the correlation, if any, between bullying and non-attendance rates could provide a platform for developing more targeted support and increased pupil attendance.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government explores how to utilise any correlation between rates of bullying and non-attendance in schools.

⁵⁰ RoP [para 59], 17 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

⁵¹ Children and Young People Committee, *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Barnardo’s Cymru, Consultation Response AB04

⁵² RoP [para 326], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

Guidance on school-time absence

103. Several of the teaching unions raised the issue of pupils being taken out of school to go on holidays during the school term.

104. Anna Brychan, NAHT Cymru told the Committee:

“Holidays are an issue that can cause problems in relation to school attendance - holidays during term time, for instance. The majority of our members sympathise with parents, who face much higher costs during the school holidays, and there is merit in having a family holiday - we would not argue against that. However, it does cause problems for schools. The latest Government guidance is a great deal more specific, allowing schools to say ‘no’, and that has been a great help. It has led to some quite difficult and challenging discussions with parents who feel very strongly that they should not miss out on the opportunity to go on holiday, which they could not afford to do otherwise, but it has made a difference and has been a very useful tool for schools.”⁵³

105. Whilst UCAC sought a clear statement in relation to taking pupils out of school to go on holidays/trips during the school term.

Use of rewards

106. NAHT Cymru and the Children’s Commissioner for Wales highlighted the benefits of introducing rewards for good attendance.

107. NAHT Cymru said:

“Other schools, particularly in the primary sector, report very positive effects from the introduction of awards for children who maintain a good attendance record (bronze award certificate for 100% attendance at Christmas; silver award certificate at Easter; gold award certificate and prize in the summer for example). Children engage very happily in this process; one school reported that it frequently exceeds its 95% attendance target by employing these strategies.”⁵⁴

⁵³ RoP [para 229], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

⁵⁴ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p5), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from NAHT Cymru and ASCL Cymru, 31 January 2013

Welsh Government Codes

108. In June 2010, the Welsh Government issued guidance on new school attendance registration codes.⁵⁵ The intention was to facilitate their consistent use in the recording of attendance information across Wales and allow greater potential for exploring the reasons why pupils are absent, improving the safeguarding and tracking of pupils and, in turn, putting in place strategies to deal effectively with specific problems.

109. Robin Brown, Head of Education Inclusion, City and County of Swansea said:

“It is all right to say that you put out guidance, and I know that we held seminars for our heads and spoke with them, but are you sure that you are always interpreting it in the same way? If you do not interpret it in the same way, your comparisons will not necessarily be on a level playing field. So, I would suggest that it would be helpful to ensure that we have a level playing field and that the Welsh Government uses those data to look for patterns in them, particularly on the coding, namely that it is being implemented as intended, and the assumptions that it draws from that.”⁵⁶

110. In their written evidence, UCAC said:

“Establishing agreed national codes for recording absences was a valuable step towards ensuring clarity and consistency. The codes have facilitated the collection of data on every level and have led to increased consistency across Wales as intended. Since adopting the new guidance, however, too much of officials time and energy on every level have been spent on reviewing and modifying these codes, to the detriment of giving due attention of the reasons for absences.”⁵⁷

Transition between primary and secondary school

111. In 2009, Professor David Egan chaired the Welsh Government Task and Finish Group on 8-14 Education Provision in Wales. The group was tasked with considering the educational experience of 8 to 14-year-olds, including their transition from primary to secondary education. Behaviour and attendance formed part of the terms of reference but did not feature heavily

⁵⁵ Welsh Government, [Guidance on School Attendance Codes](#), June 2010

⁵⁶ RoP [para 20], 27 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

⁵⁷ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p4), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from UCAC, 31 January 2013

in the group's first report. Some of the findings from the group's first report, published in 2010, included:

- Whilst many students make good progress through the 8-14 period of their education, for a significant number of young people this is a phase when their achievement in relative terms follows a downward trajectory;
- In schools (this) disengagement and consequent decline in achievement appears to be associated with difficulties faced by students in basic skills and particularly with literacy;
- Outside of school these difficulties are intensified by low aspirations and negative peer pressure;
- Many students face critical challenges in the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 that lead to later poor performance. These are associated with the different learning and teaching pedagogies they experience and problems they face in relation to basic skills, particularly literacy.

112. Referencing recent research he had undertaken in Cardiff, Professor Ken Reid told the Committee:

"The message that came across to me from some primary heads was that they were doing absolutely everything possible but then they were in despair at what happened to their pupils once they went to their local comprehensive."⁵⁸

113. He went on to say:

"I was in some primary schools in Cardiff, and I have been in other primary schools in Wales, where the attendance rates were in the order of 86%, 87% and 88%. So, putting it the other way, if you look at a school such as Fitzalan High School in Cardiff, where it inherits pupils from primary schools where the average attendance is in the order of 88%, 89% and 90% and it loses only a further 1% over five years, you could say that a school such as Fitzalan is doing incredibly well."⁵⁹

⁵⁸ RoP [para 65], 17 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

⁵⁹ Ibid

Committee View: Transition between primary and secondary school

114. The Committee notes the importance of exploring the potential to improve how pupil attendance is dealt with in the immediate period after the transition between primary and secondary school.

115. Schoolwork and lessons were a common theme in the evidence from children and young people. Some children and young people gave us evidence that they were bored in some lessons and the Committee is concerned that such issues may be exacerbated for some pupils in the early years of secondary school. A consistent approach is needed to the transition process in order to address the findings of the Task and Finish Group on 8-14 Education Provision in Wales. The Task and Finish Group found that ‘for a significant number of young people this is a phase when their achievement in relative terms follows a downward trajectory’. The development of a set of indicators to monitor a set of key performance data during the transition period may play a useful role in this regard.

116. The Committee recognises the potential for regional consortia to play a role in this regard. In particular, there is a potential for further scrutiny by regional consortia as to which secondary schools maintain levels of pupil attendance from primary schools, which decline and which improve and whether there are any lessons to be learnt in this regard.

The Welsh Government should ensure that there is a clear focus on maintaining and improving attendance rates during the transition between primary and secondary school. The potential for a strengthened role for regional consortia should be explored in this respect.

First-day Response

117. In relation to improving school attendance, Estyn said that:

“One of the key success factors has been the targeting of difficult-to-reach families and the use of ‘first-day response’ to contact families. This strategy has improved both attendance rates and standards for the pupils concerned in secondary schools but has yet to be used to full effect in primary schools.”⁶⁰

118. Estyn’s report, *Improving Attendance* (2006), says that ‘first-day response’ is where a school contacts parents by telephone on the first day of

⁶⁰ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-06-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Estyn, 21 February 2013

a pupil's absence. If one of the parents cannot be spoken to directly, the school sends a letter asking the parents to contact the school as soon as possible. This ensures that parents are made aware of their child's absence at the earliest opportunity.

Committee View: First-day Response

119. The Committee was very interested to hear about the effectiveness of the 'first-day response'. We believe there is a need to review the prevalence and variance in the use of 'first-day responses' to pupil absence to ensure all schools deliver on what is proven to be the most effective approach and note the potential for the regional consortia to play a key role in this regard.

The Welsh Government should review the evidence of how effective the use of 'first day responses' to pupil absences are with a view to issuing strengthened guidance in this regard.

Education Welfare Service

120. The Committee has received evidence of a shortage of Education Welfare Officers in Wales.

121. In their written evidence, ATL Cymru stated:

“By and large members valued the work undertaken by EWOs but reported that there was a need for more such officers in the field.”⁶¹

122. Hugh Patrick, Governor's Wales, told the Committee that there was considerable variation between local authorities and that education welfare officers were usually so stretched and covered such a wide area that they were only spasmodically available. However, where they were in place, things could be very good.

123. The Committee also heard concerns about the impact of delegated budgets on the Education Welfare Service, as it was not part of the regional consortia but employed by local authorities. Hugh Davies, ASCL Cymru said:

“Our fear is that services, such as the EWO service and other non-statutory services, will be the first victims, if you like, of the cuts.”⁶²

⁶¹ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p3), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from ATL Cymru, 31 January 2013

⁶² RoP [para 165], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

124. In their evidence, Estyn said:

“In many local authorities the links between the education welfare service (EWS) and school improvement services are not strong enough. Although in some local authorities the EWS function actually sits within the school improvement service, traditionally, attendance and education welfare have not always been seen as priorities for school improvement services.”⁶³

125. This was endorsed by the Minister for Education and Skills, who told the Committee:

“There has to be greater integration between the approach to school improvement and the operations of the education welfare service. We are going to regionally based school improvement services through the consortia, which is something of a driver. Some of the evidence you have taken indicates the importance of close integration between education welfare services and school improvement services. To put it bluntly, I do not think that we can have 22 different approaches in this area. Either there is good practice or there is not. We need to learn from it. I would like to know what the directors of education are doing to learn about that good practice and to use it. That is their responsibility.”⁶⁴

Committee View: Education Welfare Services

126. The evidence presented to the Committee has emphasised the importance of Education Welfare Services in respect of both pupil attendance and behaviour. We also noted that a move to delegate budgets to schools places an inevitable pressure on prioritising which central services are still to be provided by the local authority. The Committee also notes Estyn’s evidence that, in many local authorities, the links between the education welfare service and school improvement services are not strong enough.

127. For these reasons, and as stated previously, the Committee recommends that the strategic development, oversight of delivery and funding of education welfare and behaviour support services should be placed at a regional level.

⁶³ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-06-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Estyn, 21 February 2013

⁶⁴ RoP [para 246], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

Fixed-penalty Notices

128. When the Committee began this inquiry, the Welsh Government was consulting on proposals for the introduction of fixed-penalty notices to address the issue of persistent unauthorised absence from school.

129. None of the witnesses who gave evidence to the Committee were in support of the introduction of fixed-penalty notices.

130. Professor Ken Reid said that although fixed-penalty notices had been found to work with a small number of parents, generally they were not effective.

131. Whilst Hugh Pattrick, Governor's Wales, went so far as to say:

“I think it is disastrous. You are trying to engender a good relationship between the teaching staff, parents and children, and that is one good way of destroying all of that. People are always looking for easy answers to things, but there is no easy answer. If you just issue a fixed-penalty notice - without trying to label anybody, some of these people are those with the greatest problems; they have financial problems and other problems - all you are doing is piling one thing on top of another and that will be a complete and utter disaster.”⁶⁵

132. In May 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills announced that, following consideration of the consultation responses, he had instructed his officials to prepare regulations to introduce fixed-penalty notices for regular non-attendance at school from 1 September 2013. Guidance on the penalty notice system will be published in advance of the regulations coming into force, and will include detailed advice on the format, content, consultation and application of the local code of conduct.

Committee view: Fixed-penalty Notices

133. The Committee is disappointed at the decision to introduce fixed term penalty notices given that none of the witnesses who gave evidence to the Committee were supportive of this approach. The evidence presented to this inquiry suggests that a reward culture works best and that there are a range of other more positive measures that the Welsh Government could take forward in this regard. The Committee notes that the then Minister intended to publish guidance in advance of the regulations coming into force and

⁶⁵ RoP [para 215], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

would welcome the opportunity to have sight of and comment on the draft guidance prior to publication.

Based on the evidence we received, the Committee strongly recommends that the Minister evaluates alternative, more positive strategies to fixed penalty notes before introducing regulations and makes publically available the evidence base for the implementation of fixed penalty notices, should that decision be taken forward.

4. Behaviour

Exclusion Statistics

134. The most recently published education statistics⁶⁶ showed that permanent exclusions peaked in 2004/05 and have been decreasing every year since then. Assault or violence towards staff and defiance of rules were the two largest reasons given for permanent exclusions, together accounting for over 40% of permanent exclusions during 2011/12. Defiance of rules was the most common reason given for fixed-term exclusions of 5 days or fewer and 6 days or more.

135. The statistics also showed that, in 2010/11, Wales had a higher rate of permanent exclusions than Scotland but a lower rate than England: at secondary level, the rate is 0.7 per 1,000 pupils in Wales compared to 1.2 per 1,000 pupils in England, and in the same period, Wales's rate of fixed-term exclusions was higher than that in both England and Scotland: a rate of 43.4 per 1,000 pupils in Wales compared to a rate of 39.9 in Scotland and a rate of 39.6 in England.

136. Rolant Wynne, UCAC, told the Committee:

“What we have seen is that there has been a clear increase in the cases of extreme behaviour, particularly in the early years. That is what members have told us directly. Perhaps there is low-level disruption occurring more generally, but schools can cope with that. What we hear from members is that there is a substantial increase in a small but significant number of children who are lashing out in the first two or three years and that that affects the work of the school and of the classroom specifically, putting teachers and other pupils at risk.”⁶⁷

137. In their written evidence, Barnardo's Cymru called for a more targeted approach to support those who are at most risk of exclusions. They stated:

“The statistics for 2010-2011 highlight how exclusions have a pattern in terms of pupils who receive exclusions. Boys are affected more than girls, certain ethnic groups receive more exclusions and there is more prevalence of exclusion for SEN. We suggest that these patterns

⁶⁶ Welsh Government Statistical First Release [Exclusions from Schools in Wales 2011/12](#), 26 February 2013

⁶⁷ RoP [para 11], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

should be explored in conjunction with effective practice to reduce exclusion.”⁶⁸

What children and young people told us about behaviour

138. In our consultation with children and young people, there was a wide range of responses as to what was considered to be bad behaviour. The most common were violence or injuring someone; disrupting lessons and being disrespectful; swearing; bullying; talking back to teachers; damaging property; smoking; throwing things.

139. A large number of children and young people said that bad behaviour disrupted classes and affected their concentration and ability to learn. There were also a number of children and young people who said that the whole class had been punished as the result of one individual’s behaviour.

140. There was a wide range of responses on what should be done to improve behaviour or to control bad behaviour. The main themes related to rewards; school work; teaching; the school environment; punishment; and other support. Many children and young people suggested that there should be a system of rewards and there were a number of suggestions relating to punishment, such as the removal of privileges; detention; and isolation.

141. There were a number of suggestions about school work including more fun lessons; more lessons outside; more practical lessons; and more choice. In relation to teaching, there were suggestions regarding better communication and engagement between teachers and pupils; better training for teachers in behaviour management; teachers to be stricter or more authoritative; and more one-on-one time. A number of children and young people suggested improvements to the physical environment – less over-crowding, smaller classes and more facilities for exercise. There were also a number of suggestions about other school support such as more independent counsellors, youth workers and role models.

Use of Exclusion

142. The Committee is pleased to note that the latest Welsh Government statistics on exclusion show that permanent exclusions peaked in 2004/05 and have been decreasing every year since then.

⁶⁸ Children and Young People Committee, *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Barnardo’s Cymru, Consultation Response AB04

143. In 2010/11, there were 158 permanent exclusions from maintained primary, secondary and special schools and pupil referral units in Wales, a decrease of 27 from 2009/10. Boys accounted for almost three quarters of permanent exclusions. In 2009/10, the rate of permanent exclusions in Wales was lower than in England, but higher than in Scotland. Assault or violence towards pupils and staff were the two largest causes for permanent exclusions, together accounting for over 40% of permanent exclusions during 2010/11.

144. In his written evidence, Professor Ken Reid stated:

“The use of exclusion (including permanent/fixed-term and illegal exclusions) was fully covered in the NBAR Report (2008) but perhaps surprisingly, received comparatively little coverage in *Behaving and Attending* (2009) and in subsequent WG publications. The issues of both exclusions and unofficial exclusions, as well as the way managed moves are currently utilised and implemented by LA’s throughout Wales, commanded much attention and focus within the NBAR deliberations.”⁶⁹

145. In their written evidence ATL Cymru said:

“While we would wish to see permanent exclusions reduced to zero this cannot be at the cost of tolerating violent and threatening behaviour.”⁷⁰

146. Whilst NASUWT Cymru were of the “firm view” that the use of targets to limit or reduce the use of the exclusion sanction is unacceptable.

147. In their oral evidence, they also raised concerns regarding the appeals process. Rex Phillips told the Committee:

“[...] if the headteacher or governing body of a school has decided to exclude a pupil permanently, as long as the correct procedures have been followed and the correct processes have taken place, and everybody has decided that exclusion is the right course of action, it ill behoves an independent appeals panel to overturn the decision, because that just places the disruption back into the school.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-02-13(p1a), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Professor Ken Reid, 17 January 2013

⁷⁰ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p3), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from ATL Cymru, 31 January 2013

⁷¹ RoP [para 22], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

Committee View: Exclusions

148. The Committee has a range of concerns in respect of exclusions including those young people who appear to be in a ‘revolving door’ of exclusions, potentially for significant periods of time. Additionally, the University of Edinburgh research highlights that reintegration to mainstream school from EOTAS has not been common. We are concerned that there is insufficient focus on supporting children and young people back into mainstream provision and avoiding the spiral of exclusions that can not only affect educational achievement but potentially isolate children from both their community settings and their peers.

149. The profile of excluded children and young people is also of specific concern with over half of excluded pupils and nearly 90 per cent of pupils in EOTAS provision having special educational needs according to the latest published statistics.⁷² The correct support mechanisms must be in place to support the pupils who have identified support needs, in order for the system to tackle the behaviour of the core group of pupils where the problems relate directly to discipline within the school setting.

Unofficial / Illegal Exclusion and ‘voluntary withdrawals’

150. It is not lawful for schools to ask parents or guardians to keep their children away from school without the school giving formal notification of an exclusion. Following NBAR, the Welsh Government, and other sources, published reports that included anecdotal evidence that the practice of excluding illegally was happening in some schools across Wales.

151. In 2007, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales published a report following investigation into unofficial school exclusions,⁷³ which found that the practice of ‘unofficial’ or ‘illegal exclusions’ was widespread and could put children at risk. NBAR also found anecdotal evidence of illegal exclusions. In June 2011, the Welsh Government published a research report by Barnardo’s and SNAP Cymru, Experiences of illegal school exclusions in Wales: a qualitative study,⁷⁴ which found that:

⁷² Welsh Government Statistical First Release [Exclusions from Schools in Wales 2011/12](#), 26 February 2013

⁷³ Children’s Commissioner for Wales publication, [Report following investigation into unofficial school exclusions](#)

⁷⁴ Welsh Government: [Experiences of illegal school exclusions in Wales: a qualitative study](#)⁷⁴A partnership research project by Barnardo’s Cymru and SNAP Cymru Commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Welsh Government, June 2011

“Whilst LAs have made strenuous efforts to prevent illegal exclusions being used and have taken a variety of steps to stop schools using them, it was apparent from case evidence, professionals who were not working for the LA, and parents’ experiences, that they still occur.”

152. The study also found that:

“The data shows that exclusions often merge together between being illegal, official, voluntary and agreed absence; and generally happen repeatedly. Therefore illegal exclusions happen at all ages and in mainstream and specialist sectors...” and

“Schools need more flexible options for offering support. Illegal exclusions seem to occur when they do not know what else to do but do not want to issue an official exclusion.”

153. In his written evidence, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales stated:

“The evidence included in the Welsh Government commissioned study of illegal school exclusions (2011) is of great concern to me. There is clear evidence to suggest that there are cases where children and young people are having their right to an education unlawfully removed.”⁷⁵

154. At the Children and Young People Committee meeting on 31 January 2013, NAHT Cymru suggested that the practice of illegal/unofficial exclusions was possibly something that was more widespread 10 years ago and that they would be “surprised” if there was much evidence of this happening on a regular basis in 2013. They suggested that this was because of more rigorous monitoring systems relating to attendance.

155. However, in their evidence, SNAP Cymru stated that they have worked directly with 92 cases of illegal exclusions. In oral evidence, they provided an example of where the mother of a child who has Asperger’s syndrome, who was in the last year of primary school, was asked to take him out of school for an early holiday as the school was due to be inspected. In their experience, this is quite common, but they believe that parents with children who may have more challenging behaviour are just glad that they are able to keep them in school and so do not complain about it.

⁷⁵ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-05-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 6 February 2013

‘Voluntary withdrawals’

156. In his written evidence the Children’s Commissioner for Wales states:

“I am surprised and concerned that although Welsh Government guidance sets out the nature of unlawful exclusions and the reasons why they must always be considered illegal it also includes a section on ‘voluntary withdrawals’ (2012:17). The guidance states that ‘influencing or encouraging parents/carers to ‘voluntarily withdraw their child from school as a way of dealing with difficult or challenging behaviour is not an appropriate response’ and states that local authorities will need to consider what action is appropriate where schools are found to be practising ‘voluntary’ withdrawals. I would suggest that the practice of ‘voluntary withdrawals’ represents permanent exclusions by another name without any of the safeguards and educational entitlements associated with official procedure. Welsh Government should adopt a stronger position in relation to non-tolerance of ‘voluntary withdrawal’ practice as it clearly runs contrary to the best interests of the child principle.”⁷⁶

157. The Welsh Government 2011 Guidance on Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units referred to by the Commissioner states:

“Influencing or encouraging parents/carers to ‘voluntarily withdraw’ their child from school as a way of dealing with difficult or challenging behaviour is not an appropriate response. Heavy pressure put on parents/carers to withdraw their child, particularly to withdraw a child permanently, denies the child an education, as it is unlikely that a new school place can be arranged quickly [...].LAs will need to consider what action is appropriate where schools are found to be practising ‘voluntary’ withdrawals”.

158. In his oral evidence, the Minister referred to research commissioned from the University of Edinburgh to examine the process of exclusions from school and also the delivery, planning and commissioning of education provision outside the school setting. When commissioning the research, the Welsh Government stated that:

"This important piece of research will play a key role in the development of policy aimed at improving both the consistency and

⁷⁶ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-05-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 6 February 2013

fairness of the exclusion process, as well as the quality and consistency of alternative provision in Wales."⁷⁷

Committee View: Unofficial / Illegal exclusion and voluntary withdrawals

159. The Committee was very concerned to hear such contradictory evidence in respect of the prevalence of what are referred to as either unofficial or illegal exclusions. Some witnesses suggested it was very unlikely that such practice was taking place. On the other hand, SNAP Cymru provided the Committee with statistical information on the cases they have dealt with of children they say were illegally excluded and provided a specific example of a child being removed from school during an inspection. We note that the University of Edinburgh report,⁷⁸ published by the Welsh Government in June 2013 found that 'nearly all local authority staff acknowledged that unlawful exclusion continued to some extent'.

160. It was disappointing that those witnesses who raised concerns about illegal exclusions have been unable to provide more conclusive evidence to support their concerns. Nevertheless, individual Members are aware of such circumstances through their constituency work and are very concerned that it appears that some children are missing out on their right to education in this way. The Committee will follow with interest the Welsh Government's response to the University of Edinburgh report and, if we deem appropriate, will revisit this specific issue to gather further evidence.

Managed Moves

161. The Welsh Government recommends the consideration of managed moves to provide pupils with the opportunity to make a fresh start in a new school. They say that this practice can also reduce the need for permanent exclusions and minimise the negative outcomes associated with them. The Welsh Government guidance states that managed moves should not be used merely as an alternative to permanent exclusion as this would be denying parents and pupils the right to appeal against the exclusion. The guidance suggests that a managed move is a strategy that is already being implemented for: pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion but who might succeed in a new environment; pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties who have received a variety of supportive strategies in their school with limited success; and pupils who find that attendance at their current school is negatively affecting their emotional welfare.

⁷⁷ [BBC News website](#) 27 February 2013

⁷⁸ [Evaluation of education provision for children and young people educated outside the school setting](#) (page 56)

162. However, Hugh Davies, ASCL Cymru, told the Committee:

“[...] quite often, managed moves, as they pan out in real life, are almost akin to permanent exclusions, because the crisis happens and the managed move is quickly cobbled together at that point. Managed moves work well when they are planned in advance. As a series of behaviours begin to demonstrate themselves in a child’s history in school, the managed move should be considered at that point, rather than at the crisis point when a permanent exclusion is a very real likelihood and a possibility. The way in which it currently maps out in practice, when the managed move is hastily organised, in effect has the same outcome as a permanent exclusion, because the child hastily leaves one school and hastily joins another. I think that we need to do a lot more work on managed moves.”⁷⁹

163. When asked whether schools who have moved a pupil via the managed move policy should in turn accept a pupil under the policy, Robin Brown, Head of Education Inclusion at City and County of Swansea, said:

“If you could make it work like that, that would really help. However, it does not quite work like that in practice for us because our full schools are the popular schools, and they may well have different criteria for behaviour, but it just does not work out for us to have a quota system.”⁸⁰

Committee View: Managed Moves

164. The Committee was concerned about the potential for the Welsh Government guidance in this regard to have the unintended consequence of creating high concentrations of pupils who attend the same school via a managed move. Local authorities should be vigilant in this respect and any future review of Welsh Government guidance should take this specific issue into account.

Provision to pupils who are Educated Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) including in Pupil Referral Units (PRU)

165. In his written evidence Professor Reid stated:

“The position in Wales on EOTAS is extremely complicated. As a whole, the country suffers from an acute shortage of EOTAS provision

⁷⁹ RoP [para 245], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

⁸⁰ RoP [para 83], 27 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

and such provision which currently exists is both disparate and uneven with, as ESTYN has recognised, considerable improvements needed...⁸¹ and:

“Conwy is probably the leading authority in this field in Wales. Some other LAs in Wales have little or no alternative provision for a wide variety of reasons, despite clear needs.”⁸²

166. Estyn’s ‘A survey of the arrangements for pupils’ wellbeing and behaviour management in pupil referral units⁸³ found that although teaching and support staff in pupil referral units in Wales are well trained and are confident when working with vulnerable pupils, most pupil referral units need to review and improve their policies, pupil-planning systems, risk assessment and records management. In most cases, PRU pupil-planning systems do not address the management of difficult behaviour with individual pupils well enough.

167. In their written evidence, NASUWT Cymru stated:

“The Welsh Government should ensure that a properly resourced national system of high-quality off-site placements is in place to assist schools to avoid permanent exclusion and to support pupils who are permanently excluded.”⁸⁴

168. In their written evidence, NUT Cymru stated:

“Provision for pupils educated otherwise than in school vary significantly from Authority to Authority.”⁸⁵

169. While in his written evidence, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales referred to:

“[...] a grim picture of the education offer provided to children and young people EOTAS. Every child has a right to an education that will develop their abilities and talents to the full (Article 29, UNCRC) and evidence according to the Welsh Government review suggests that we

⁸¹ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-02-13(p1a), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Professor Ken Reid, 17 January 2013

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Estyn publication, [A survey of the arrangements for pupils’ wellbeing and behaviour management in pupil referral units](#), January 2012

⁸⁴ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p2), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from NASUWT Cymru and ASCL Cymru, 31 January 2013

⁸⁵ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from NUT Cymru, 31 January 2013

cannot have confidence that children who are EOTAS will have this right realised.”⁸⁶

170. The Welsh Government action plan, developed in March 2011, *Making a Difference on Behaviour and Attendance, An Action Plan for 2011-2013*⁸⁷ included a commitment to publish and implement an action plan on improving EOTAS. The EOTAS action plan⁸⁸ was published in August 2011 and contains 17 recommendations identified to begin in 2011-2012. In response to the review, the Welsh Government commissioned a research team from Edinburgh University. One of the objectives of the research was to examine the barriers to and ways to improve the planning and commissioning of alternative provision both at an area level and for the individual. The Committee notes that the recently published report⁸⁹ found that current EOTAS statistics probably underestimate the numbers educated outside school. The report also states that ‘overall, the research found that many of the concerns expressed in NBAR report, the Estyn reports and the Welsh Government Review to be well-founded’.

Home Tuition

171. The Children’s Commissioner for Wales also told the Committee:

“Welsh Government’s guidance on exclusion from schools and pupil referral units (2012) suggests that individual tuition, particularly in the learner’s home is not usually well suited to meeting the needs of learners except in the short term as part of a carefully co-ordinated package. However in 2010/11, 30% of permanently excluded pupils were given home tuition as their education provision. This individual tuition was the most frequently used provision for pupils whose main education is other than at school.”⁹⁰

172. According to the most recently published Welsh Government Statistical First Release Exclusions from Schools in Wales 2011/12,⁹¹ almost a quarter

⁸⁶ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-05-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 6 February 2013

⁸⁷ Welsh Government publication, [Making a Difference on Behaviour and Attendance - An Action Plan for 2011-2013](#)

⁸⁸ Welsh Government publication, [Review of Education Otherwise than at School and Action Plan](#), August 2011

⁸⁹ [Evaluation of education provision for children and young people educated outside the school setting](#)

⁹⁰ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-05-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 6 February 2013

⁹¹ Welsh Government Statistical First Release *Exclusions from Schools in Wales 2011/12*, February 2013

of all permanently excluded pupils (23 out of 102) were educated at home. This is a drop from 47 out of 158 excluded pupils receiving home tuition in the previous year (2010/11).

Pupil Referral Units

173. Anna Brychan, NAHT Cymru, told the Committee that her members had raised concerns that the units within schools had not necessarily been designed with the needs of the pupils in mind, and that they tended to be old buildings.

174. She went on to say:

“The requirements of children who have additional learning needs can be very different, and they can clash. Some children need fewer stimuli within their environments to enable them to progress to the best of their abilities. Others need the complete opposite to that. There is a concern that we do not think—while altering school buildings or building new ones—about those children’s needs carefully enough to ensure that we can adapt the environments to suit individuals. We are trying to create a provision within which individuals can improve to the best of their abilities. If they are in an environment with other pupils who have conflicting learning needs, then that can cause a real problem.”⁹²

175. The Committee heard that where units were within schools, very often, the attendance and results of the pupils in the unit counted towards the overall school figures. This was having a negative impact on the overall school figures and had resulted in schools ending up in low bands or in special measures; not because of what was happening in the main school, but because of what was happening in the unit.

176. Whilst Hugh Davies, ASCL Cymru, said:

“One of the issues with PRUs is that the original philosophy behind them was that they were a revolving door and that children would go back to school - it would not be a once-and-for-all strategy. That does not always happen and pupils disappear into PRUs and stay there forever and, if you like, hold spaces. The other issue is the amount of provision that they get. Are they getting their statutory rights for 25 hours and so on?

⁹² RoP [para 197], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

“A wider issue, which applies to PRUs and alternative pathways, is that schools still maintain responsibility for those children and their progress. Sometimes the interface between schools and, let us say, pupil referral units is not as strong as it needs to be because the school still has an ongoing commitment to that child; that is the same in relation to pathways as well. Sometimes, there is not sufficient dialogue around the needs of the child. I think that the child is the victim - the casualty - at the end of that process, or lack of it.”⁹³

177. As stated above, in his oral evidence, the Minister referred to research commissioned from the University of Edinburgh which examines the process of exclusions from school and also the delivery, planning and commissioning of education provision outside the school setting.

Committee View: EOTAS Provision

178. The Committee was struck by the evidence we heard that there is an acute shortage of EOTAS provision and the suggestion that the provision that does exist is both disparate and uneven. Similarly, it is of concern that the Children’s Commissioner for Wales referred to ‘a grim picture’ with regard to EOTAS. Children who are educated EOTAS are potentially some of the most vulnerable children in Wales.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should work with regional consortia and other key stakeholders to explore the feasibility and benefits of developing and commissioning Educated Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) provision on a regional basis and potentially on an all Wales basis.

179. The University of Edinburgh research highlights a number of issues which are of interest and of concern to the Committee. This includes the fact that nearly 90% of pupils in EOTAS provision had special educational needs and, of those, 40% were educated in pupil referral units. Nearly 70% of EOTAS pupils were entitled to free school meals and 75% were male. The report also highlights issues relating to the quality of the curriculum in some EOTAS; the poor quality and unsuitable accommodation of some EOTAS; and the concerns expressed by some adults participating in the research about the excessively punitive use of restraint and restrictive isolation. We also

⁹³ RoP [para 202], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

note that the report highlights that reintegration to mainstream school from EOTAS has not been common.

180. Our inquiry sought to take evidence on a wide range of issues relevant to attendance and behaviour and in the time available we were unable to focus specific attention on some of the aspects of EOTAS of which Members have a specific interest. Further to our full consideration of the evidence in the University of Edinburgh research, this Committee will take further evidence on EOTAS provision including provision made via Pupil Referral Units.

Number of hours that should be provided for excluded pupils

181. Welsh Government guidance states that the aim should be to provide full-time education to all excluded pupils after 15 days of their being excluded, on a permanent or fixed-term basis. Full-time means offering supervised education or other activity equivalent to that offered by mainstream schools in the area, ie: Key Stage 1: 21 hours; Key Stage 2: 23.5 hours; Key Stage 3 /4: 24 hours; and Key Stage 4 (Yr 11): 25 hours. Written evidence provided by NAHT and ASCL referred to concerns regarding variations in the hours during which EOTAS pupils are expected to formally attend establishments, whilst officially remaining in full-time education. SNAP Cymru told us:

“When they are excluded, they are entitled to 25 hours of education a week, but it does not happen. Most of the time, they receive five hours a week if they are lucky.”⁹⁴

182. The Minister for Education and Skills told us:

“If we have that level of evidence, then we need to take action on it. We clearly have additional work going on ourselves, through the University of Edinburgh study.”⁹⁵

183. The University of Edinburgh research found that education provision ranged across local authorities from two hours per day through to a full 25 hours per week.

⁹⁴ RoP [para 273], 21 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

⁹⁵ RoP [para 298], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

Committee view: Number of hours that should be provided for excluded pupils

184. The Committee is concerned that children and young people are not receiving their full entitlement to education. Often, parents will be the main source for evidence that pupils are not receiving their entitlement and we note that often parents are grateful to receive any provision at all. Sometimes parents are unaware of their children's rights in this respect. The provision of individual development plans for all excluded pupils could help to ensure that children are receiving their full entitlement. Where relevant, such plans must also identify what support is needed to reintegrate the pupil back into mainstream provision and detail how this support will be provided.

Behaviour Support Services

185. In their written evidence, Barnardo's Cymru stated that:

"[...] when behaviour support services are good they are fantastic and enable accelerated learning and positive education experiences for children and young people. However, when behaviour support services do not meet the needs of the child or do not work in partnership with parents and carers, the experience of school can become a long negative process."⁹⁶

186. In their written evidence, Ceredigion County Council highlighted the work they had done to establish behaviour support services as part of their school improvement strategy:

"The highly successful Behaviour Support Strategy has excellent processes and support is in place for early identification, support and graduated intervention. The behaviour support service works effectively with a wide range of partners. Positive networks are in place. These provide very effective individualised pupil, classroom or school level support and training..."⁹⁷

187. And, in their oral evidence stated:

"We have trained over 300 school support staff on behaviour support strategies in primary and secondary schools. The other thing that is key in the secondary schools is that we have what we call hafan ac

⁹⁶ Children and Young People Committee, *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Barnardo's Cymru, Consultation Response AB04

⁹⁷ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-07-13(p2), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Ceredigion County Council, 27 February 2013

encil, which are seclusion and nurture, which have been fundamental in building capacity, because attendance is a lot to do with nurture. Low-level behaviour problems can be managed by seclusion, so you can then build school capacity to manage those elements. For the really challenging individuals, you need a strong central support service and a flexible alternative curriculum. Without that flexibility and that alternative curriculum, you do not have pathways.”⁹⁸

188. As stated previously, in order to increase the consistency of provision, the Committee recommends that the strategic development, oversight of delivery and funding of education welfare and behaviour support services should be placed at a regional level.

School Counselling

189. Several of those who gave evidence highlighted the important role that school counselling can play in supporting pupils who have attendance or behaviour issues. In written evidence, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy highlighted that the evaluation of the Welsh Government school-based counselling strategy showed that counselling had a positive impact on the attainment, attendance and behaviour of children who had received the service. They cited that 85% of children felt more positive about going to school and more able to cope after being given counselling.

190. Ceredigion County Council also referred to ‘an effective school based counselling service available to all pupils’ and said that ‘this is being enhanced by the provision of free community based counselling for adults to which schools signpost parents when appropriate’.

Support for pupils with Additional Learning Needs

191. In their evidence, SNAP Cymru provided information on a range of exclusion cases that they had worked on. Of the six cases SNAP Cymru outlined in their written evidence, five had some form of identified Additional Need. Caroline Rawson told the Committee:

“We get a lot of exclusions from both primary and secondary schools, more so with children with additional learning needs from primary school than from secondary school, but the pattern is fairly even.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸ RoP [para 142], 27 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

⁹⁹ RoP [para 252], 21 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

192. The Welsh Government statistical bulletin, Exclusions from Schools, 2010/11 (February 2012), showed that pupils with special educational needs accounted for about half of all exclusions during 2010/11.

193. ATL Cymru reported that:

“Schools require the specialist resources for children with ALNs to stimulate and engage learners. Some members report that their schools are not in a position to be able to provide specialist resources required. Some concern has been expressed that the drive to greater delegation of funding to schools, which we broadly welcome, should be sensitive in regard to its impact on ALN pupils.”¹⁰⁰

194. Barnardo’s Cymru also told the Committee:

“We would suggest that behaviour support on a day to day basis for children with additional needs is highly variable between schools and regions. Parents of disabled children often feel that their children are being punished for behaviour that is linked to their disability rather than behaviour which is negative per se.”¹⁰¹

195. The Minister for Education and Skills confirmed that his department was very conscious of the needs of pupil with additional learning needs when developing policies and guidance. He advised the Committee:

“We are very alive to it. We have been through a consultation process in relation to additional learning needs and how we take forward our plans for individual learning plans. We plan to legislate in this area in due course, and there is extensive discussion among my officials within those departments about this.”¹⁰²

Committee view: Additional learning needs

196. As stated earlier in the report, the profile of excluded children and young people is of specific concern to the Committee, with over half of excluded pupils and nearly 90% of pupils in EOTAS provision having special educational needs according to the latest published statistics.¹⁰³ The correct

¹⁰⁰ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p3), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from ATL Cymru, 31 January 2013

¹⁰¹ Children and Young People Committee, *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Barnardo’s Cymru, Consultation Response AB04

¹⁰² RoP [para 335], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

¹⁰³ Welsh Government Statistical First Release [Exclusions from Schools in Wales 2011/12](#), 26 February 2013

support mechanisms must be in place to support the pupils who have identified support needs.

197. The Committee has noted the Welsh Government's proposals, consulted on in 2012,¹⁰⁴ to replace Special Educational Need statements with new integrated Individual Development Plans (IDP) for children and young people. The proposals also set out how integrated plans would cover those aged 0–25 years who fall within different categories of need. We also note that the Welsh Government had intended to include such provisions in the *Education (Wales) Bill* relating to reforming the legislative framework for additional learning needs but that these have not been included in the Bill as introduced. The Minister has recently announced that his officials will be seeking views from stakeholders in the autumn with a revised consultation document to be published before the end of the year.¹⁰⁵

198. The Committee looks forward to receiving and scrutinising the Welsh Government's legislation in respect of pupils with Additional Learning Needs at the earliest opportunity. Many of the concerns highlighted in this report in respect of pupil attendance and behaviour will not be addressed unless the Welsh Government takes forward key areas of work relating to ALN provision.

Lack of Parental Support for Sanctions

199. One issue that was brought to the Committee's attention by a number of witnesses was the lack of support from parents when sanctions are imposed by schools.

200. ATL Cymru's written evidence stated:

“Members report varying levels of parental engagement and support in disciplinary issues. Some note that a few parents are reluctant or even hostile to support the school in its behaviour and discipline policies.”¹⁰⁶

201. The joint submission by NAHT Cymru and ASCL Cymru also said:

¹⁰⁴ Forward in partnership for children and young people with additional needs: [Proposals for reform of the legislative framework for special educational needs](#)

¹⁰⁵ Written Statement - [Summary of responses to the consultation 'Forward in Partnership for children and young people with additional needs'](#)

¹⁰⁶ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p3), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from ATL Cymru, 31 January 2013

“Parents frequently refuse to support the school in the imposition of sanctions, and significant amounts of staff time are wasted having to attempt to negotiate with parents who are unwilling to accept that their child must recognise his/her responsibilities in this regard.”¹⁰⁷

202. Whilst Tim Pratt, Head of Caerleon Comprehensive School, told the Committee:

“As it happens, there is a case in my own school and, this morning, one of my deputies is dealing with a parent who is not prepared for their child to undergo a sanction. It makes it hard for staff to keep the level of discipline that they want when they find that there are challenges that delay the imposition of any sanction.”¹⁰⁸

203. The Committee was also told that if a parent refuses to accept a sanction, teachers had to enter into negotiations to try and find a compromise, which often took a lot of time and effort, and this was time that should be spent doing other things.

Collaborative Working Arrangements

Joint-working between relevant agencies

204. The Committee heard evidence of a lack of joint-working to support schools, for example from social services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

205. In their written evidence, NUT Cymru said:

“The hardest pressed services seem to be Education Psychology and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS). In the case of CAHMS in particular, in some Local Authorities there is an excessive waiting list with unacceptable delays between referrals being made and pupils being seen. Support from Social Services is also an issue. Schools often complain that the feedback they get from Social Services after referrals are made is late, inadequate or non-existent. There is, however, evidence of good practice where schools hold

¹⁰⁷ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p5), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from NAHT Cymru and ASCL Cymru, 31 January 2013

¹⁰⁸ RoP [para 220], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

regular multi agency meetings to share ideas and good practice in relation to the provision for individual pupils.”¹⁰⁹

206. Rolant Wynne, UCAC, also highlighted issues in relation to staff turnover. He said:

“Speaking from experience, social services are very good, but the turnover of staff is very high. Therefore, in order to ensure co-operation, there needs to be some degree of stability. Families might have one social worker for three months, but then another after that. The system falls down because there is no consistency with regard to the staff in other agencies.”¹¹⁰

207. In their written evidence, Estyn said:

“Support for attendance works most effectively when local authority officers work closely with schools and a range of partners to share responsibility for improving performance. In those authorities judged to be good or better, effective co-operation between statutory and voluntary partners has led to the establishment of multi-agency and multi-disciplinary teams to focus on the specific needs of learners and their families. In a few cases, this has led to co-ordinated support and intervention designed to meet identified social and educational needs.”

208. David Healey, ATL Cymru, told the Committee about an example of collaboration that was working well in south Gwynedd:

“[...] it is basically multi-agency working around the child, and the agencies are working so closely together, and have built up such a good level of trust, that they now nominate a single person from whichever agency - and it can be any of them, literally - as the contact with the family, through which all the other agencies feed.”¹¹¹

209. The Committee also received evidence on the way in which the police are working with schools. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Cymru highlighted a number of initiatives they were involved in, including:

- All Wales School Liaison Core Programme - which provides every school with a dedicated Schools Community Police Officer (SCPO);

¹⁰⁹ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-04-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from NUT Cymru, 31 January 2013

¹¹⁰ RoP [para 126], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

¹¹¹ RoP [para 115], 31 January 2013, Children and Young People Committee

- The PUPIL Scheme (Pupils Understanding Problems in their Locality) – an approach which involves Community Support Officers working with schools to develop skills and improve behaviour;
- The MOSS Model (Model of Secondary School Support) - The model aims to ensure that the distinction between the roles of the School Community Police Officer (SCPOs) and neighbourhood-based police are clearly defined to provide effective joined-up support for secondary schools across Wales; School Crime Beat Protocol;
- Restorative Justice Programmes.

210. In their written evidence, they stated:

“All of the above initiatives enable the Police and Partner organisations to focus on the needs of children and their families. This level of support provides opportunities for early intervention and a “case management” approach to individuals, which has a positive impact upon the children and young people they support, in relation to attendance and behaviour.”¹¹²

211. Superintendent Liane Bartlett told the Committee:

“The all-Wales schools core programme is the envy of colleagues across the water – the fact that we are able to access as many schools as we do in a consistent and clear manner. The level of engagement has brought rewards.”¹¹³

212. She went on to say, however, that she believed there was still a need for a less parochial attitude and more joint-working between the police and local authority and education counterparts to provide a holistic picture:

“A school is a community and the neighbourhood policing team members and their local authority colleagues are another community, and they seem to be working in isolation as opposed to being joined up, so there needs to be a better integration of those local services.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-07-13(p3), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Association of Chief Police Officers Cymru, 27 February 2013

¹¹³ RoP [para 183], 27 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

¹¹⁴ RoP [para 186], 27 February 2013, Children and Young People Committee

Links with other Welsh Government Initiatives

213. A number of witnesses highlighted the opportunities programmes such as Families First could provide in improving joint-working. In the Save the Children report, Professor David Egan stated:

“Significant opportunities exist to improve the links between schools and communities in the most disadvantaged parts of Wales through closer working with Flying Start, Families First, Communities First and Community Focused Schools.

The national priority in education to reduce the poverty gap along with the extension of Flying Start, the introduction of Families First and the further development of Communities First provide a unique opportunity to develop a holistic approach within the Welsh Government’s Tackling Poverty Strategy that can provide the solution that is required to significantly reduce the impact of poverty on education.”¹¹⁵

214. ACPO stated:

“A number of Local Authorities have meeting structures in place, such as Families First and Team Around the Family, which provides opportunities for partner agencies to raise issues and concerns regarding behaviour and attendance. In order to improve behaviour and attendance figures, it would be advisable to review the approach in any priority area, to ensure that the appropriate structures are in place.”¹¹⁶

215. While Estyn said:

“Additional activity that has the potential to have a positive impact on attendance and behaviour is being developed through the Families First programme. The strength of this work often lies in how well agencies co-ordinate their work with a family. However, this work is

¹¹⁵ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-09-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Professor David Egan, 13 March 2013

¹¹⁶ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-07-13(p3), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Association of Chief Police Officers Cymru, 27 February 2013

not always well connected with school improvement services at a strategic level.”¹¹⁷

216. The Minister for Education and Skills told the Committee that whilst no formal evaluation had been undertaken, there was some evidence that Flying Start was having a positive impact on attendance:

“We have some evidence that young people who have been through the Flying Start programme are more engaged in learning, and we also have some evidence – I would not say that it was good evidence, yet – of parental engagement also being improved through the Flying Start programme.”¹¹⁸

Links with the Third Sector

217. The Committee heard from a number of witnesses about the valuable contribution that third sector organisations can make in addressing issues around attendance and behaviour.

218. Barnardo’s Cymru said that they believed the autonomy of schools could lead them to not be fully aware of the resources and expertise held in the third sector:

“However, once working with schools, communication and joint working with the third sector is seen as positive and there is an improved commitment to achieving the shared outcome of improving opportunities for pupils.”¹¹⁹

219. YMCA Wales told us:

“The present arrangements for tackling attendance and behaviour issues across Wales do not in our view appear to have had a significant impact in reducing the numbers of young people presenting with attendance and behavioural issues. We believe a change of policy direction is necessary, which recognises and promotes the important role which non-formal learning (such as youth work and community work) can play...” and

¹¹⁷ Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(4)-06-13(p1), *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Estyn, 21 February 2013

¹¹⁸ RoP [para 322], 13 March 2013, Children and Young People Committee

¹¹⁹ Children and Young People Committee, *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from Barnardo’s Cymru, Consultation Response AB04

“Non-formal learning alternatives to formal education cannot normally be provided by schools on their own; by definition the school setting and the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students may well be perceived by the young person as part of “the problem”. However, the third sector in general and YMCA in particular can offer a range of cost-effective non-formal learning programmes and activities which have a track record of delivering positive outcomes for young people such as these.”¹²⁰

220. In his response, the Minister for Education and Skills acknowledged the importance of youth work and confirmed that a national youth work strategy would be produced.

Committee View: Links with the Third Sector

221. In respect of collaborative working arrangements, the Committee was disappointed to hear that the lack of joint-working between statutory agencies is yet again hampering efforts to provide the right support for children. These barriers to effective multi-agency working must be resolved if the Welsh Government is to secure future improvements to attendance levels and in tackling problem behaviour. Most importantly, children in Wales must receive the holistic services from a range of agencies (where needed) so that they are supported to achieve their full potential. We heard of the valuable contribution third sector organisations can make to addressing issues around attendance and behaviour. Again, this input must be harnessed in order to maximise the range of options for quality education provision that should be available to all children and young people in Wales.

Committee conclusion: Attendance and behaviour

222. In this report we have detailed areas where the Welsh Government and other key stakeholders need to take action. Since the publication of the National Attendance and Behaviour Review in 2008, there has been much attention on issues relating to pupil attendance and behaviour.

223. We are very grateful to the children and young people who gave the time to share their views and experiences with us and are committed to keep our attention on issues which have such a direct impact on individual pupils and their families.

¹²⁰ Children and Young People Committee, *Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour*, Written Evidence from YMCA Wales, Consultation Response AB01

The Committee remains concerned over the slow and patchy progress there has been in addressing attendance and behavioural issues despite these issues having been examined and documented by Government and Local Authorities over a number of years. Therefore the Committee intends to revisit this inquiry to monitor progress before the conclusion of this Assembly Term.

Annex A – Witnesses

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full at:

<http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=1305>

17 January 2013		
Professor Ken Reid		CYP(4)-02-13(p1a) CYP(4)-02-13(p1b) CYP(4)-02-13(p1c) CYP(4)-02-13(p1d)
31 January 2013		
David Evans	NUT Cymru	CYP(4)-04-13(p1)
Rex Phillips,	NASUWT	CYP(4)-02-13(p2)
David Healey	ATL Cymru	CYP(4)-02-13(p3)
Rolant Wynne	UCAC	CYP(4)-02-13(p4)
Anna Brychan Mark Durbin	NAHT Cymru	CYP(4)-02-13(p5)
Hugh Davies Tim Pratt	ASCL Cymru	CYP(4)-02-13(p5)
6 February 2013		
Keith Towler	Children’s Commissioner for Wales	CYP(4)-05-13(p1)
21 February 2013		
Ann Keane Simon Brown Meilyr Rowlands	Estyn	CYP(4)-06-13(p1)
Caroline Rawson	SNAP Cymru	CYP(4)-06-13(p1)

27 February 2013

Ian James Robin Brown	City and County of Swansea	CYP(4)-07-13(p1)
Arwyn Thomas	Ceredigion County Council	CYP(4)-07-13(p2)
Superintendent Liane Bartlett,	Association of Chief Police Officers Cymru	CYP(4)-07-13(p3)

13 March 2013

Professor David Egan		CYP(4)-09-13(p1) CYP(4)-09-13(p2)
Hugh Patrick Jane Morris	Governors Wales	CYP(4)-09-13(p3)
Leighton Andrews Ruth Conway Kara Richards	Minister for Education & Skills Welsh Government	CYP(4)-09-13(p4)

Annex B – Consultation Responses

The following people and organisations responded to the call for evidence.
All responses can be viewed in full at:

<http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=5218>

AB01	YMCA Wales
AB02	GL Education Group
AB03	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
AB04	Barnardo's Cymru
AB05	Associated Community Training

Annex C – Organisations that participated in Focus Groups

Grŵp Ganolfan Gwobr Agored Llangefni
North West Wales High School, Year 10
St Joseph's Catholic and Anglican School, Wrexham, Year 10
Pupil Referral Unit Ysgol yr Wyddfïd, Llandudno
Ysgol y Pant, Pontyclun, Rhondda Cynon Taf
Ysgol Gymraeg Teilo Sant, Llandeilo – Years 5 and 6
Llamau, Merthyr Tydfil
Llamau, Cardiff
The Prince's Trust, Cardiff
SNAP Cymru, Swansea
Conwy and Denbighshire Branch - National Autistic Society
Voices from Care
Gwasanaeth Swyddogion Lles Ynys Môn
Ysgol Gymraeg Melin Gruffydd, Years 5 and 6
Detached Youth Group (Ferndale Community School – Step-Up Programme)
Ferndale Community School
Cardiff Traveller Education Service
Amelia Farm Trust