



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

The Education (Levels of Progression for
Key Stages 1, 2 and 3) Order (Northern
Ireland) 2012

17 October 2012

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Michaela Boyle
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Chris Hazzard
Mr Trevor Lunn
Miss Michelle McIlveen
Mr Sean Rogers
Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Mrs Katrina Godfrey	Department of Education
Mr Dale Heaney	Department of Education
Mr Carl Savage	Department of Education

The Deputy Chairperson: We welcome Dale Heaney, head of the qualifications and assessment team; Carl Savage, a member of the qualifications and assessment team; and Katrina Godfrey. Do you want to make your presentation? You are very welcome yet again.

Mrs Katrina Godfrey (Department of Education): I know; three weeks in a row. Some girls have all the luck. *[Laughter.]*

The Deputy Chairperson: Or not.

Mrs Godfrey: Or not.

Chair, I am conscious that, following last week's session, the Committee asked for some additional information, particularly on what the implications would be if the Department were not able to make the order that the Committee is considering. We thought that it would be more useful for the Committee if we put that information in a short, additional paper, and I apologise that it was only possible to get that paper to the Committee this morning. Hopefully, you have it now and it will not take you too long to digest the key paragraphs. The paper explains briefly the background to the issue, which, I must stress, is a distinct and separate issue from the computer-based assessment issue that I know is also concerning the Committee and the Department. The statutory rule relates purely to the end of Key Stage assessment in literacy or communication; numeracy or using maths; and using information and communication technology (ICT). It does not relate, in any way, to computer-based assessment at the start of the school year, which is the subject of different legislation that is already in place.

The rule the Committee is considering today would have the effect of putting two things in legislation: the levels of progression, which have been discussed by the Committee at various times and in various guises; and the introduction of moderated teacher assessment. The latter is dealt with not so much in the order but in the accompanying document, which is referred to in the statutory rule as the assessment document and which will itself, therefore, have a statutory force.

There are a couple more things that might be useful to stress. First, it is important to make it clear that, as things stand, teachers are already required to assess pupils, determine outcomes for those pupils and report those outcomes at the end of each Key Stage. So, this statutory rule will improve and clarify the standards and improve the means of assessment. It does not introduce assessment; rather it changes how assessment is carried out.

Secondly, it is important to explain that, after very extensive consultation a couple of years ago, including with the previous Committee, the view was taken that moderation is needed so that we can all have confidence that there is consistency, fairness and robustness in how assessment takes place. Remember, we are talking about assessment at just three points in a child's 12 years of compulsory schooling and in just three areas, and those are areas to which we all attach particular importance: communication or literacy, using maths and using ICT.

The implications of not proceeding with the rule are set out in paragraphs 9 to 12 of the short paper we tabled this morning. As this has been on a trajectory that has been announced and taken through the Committee at various points in the past, one of the things that we recognised was the need to give plenty of warning to schools about when the arrangements would take effect. From 2010-11, schools have been working on the understanding that, in the summer of next year, they will assess pupils against the levels of progression. That has been where the focus has been, and training, support and guidance documentation has been provided on the basis that it makes sense to prepare the ground before you go live with something. The paper explains that background and stresses the Department's view that introducing the standards that will apply in the levels of progression to literacy and numeracy is a really important element of our wider efforts to improve outcomes for pupils in those areas.

Those are the key points, Chair. As I said, paragraphs 9 to 12 of the paper will, hopefully, give you at least some of the answers to your questions. However, we are very happy to take any further questions from members as part of the process of helping you to complete the scrutiny that it is your role to undertake.

The Deputy Chairperson: Thank you very much, Katrina. Having read through the documents, my biggest concern is about comments like this:

"Participants in the trial were unsure about how they could meet the deadlines or manage the process in the time proposed."

All the way through everything we read there seems to be a plea from the teachers that there is so much going on that they really do not have time to do this.

Mrs Godfrey: And yet, Chair, this is assessment that they already do at the end of each Key Stage. Teachers already have to assess pupils in literacy and numeracy. ICT is new. We know that, and that is why we have said that we will bring it in a year after everything else. However, they already assess pupils in literacy and numeracy, and as I explained last week, they assess them against levels that predate the revised curriculum. The key thing is that because teachers do that assessment themselves, they tell us that, although they believe that they are doing it to the very best of their ability, they do not have the confidence that everybody is doing it the same way. Post-primary principals tell us that, when they see the Key Stage 2 outcomes for the children that come into their schools in year 8, they do not have confidence in them. Moderation was introduced as a response to that cry of "Please can we have something that allows us — whether we are teachers, principals, MLAs, taxpayers or parents — to be absolutely sure that children are being assessed consistently." That is the objective at the heart of this and the key change. It is not that teachers are having to start to assess, it is that the assessment has an additional degree of, if you like, scrutiny or checking in a sample of cases just to make sure that there is that consistency that everybody felt was necessary.

The Deputy Chairperson: It just seems that, if they are doing it already, does it need that moderation on top? It is the moderation that will take up time.

Mrs Godfrey: The moderation should actually be creating work for the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), not teachers. Remember, the moderation just requires a school to hand over a sample of the assessments that they are already required to do and to be prepared to receive feedback on those assessments. The idea is that if the moderation shows that you are bang on and applying the standard consistently and appropriately, the only thing that will possibly happen is that either you will be moderated less or, we hope, that you would deploy those teachers to help others in their moderation. If the moderation shows that you are having difficulty in applying the standard in your school, that is the trigger for support and extra training. Those are really the only two outcomes that could happen with moderation: either you are doing it right, in which case, having checked, great, we now know that you are and will leave you alone; or you are not there yet, and we can give you more help.

Mr Lunn: The briefing paper mentions the Education Minister's policy: "Count, read; succeed". That is very catchy. However, it also says:

"children are progressing in the core cross-curricular skills (initially Communication (literacy))".

Surely that is not saying that communication skills are the same as literacy.

Mrs Godfrey: It is saying, Trevor, that the way in which we now define literacy recognises that it is not just about reading and writing but about talking and listening. That very much reflects feedback we received when we brought in the revised curriculum, particularly from business and employers. They felt that it was fine having a young person coming into the world of work who could read and write well, but that if they were not able to communicate effectively, follow instructions or develop their interpersonal skills, that was not a good thing. The definition of literacy has widened: it is reading, writing, talking and listening; communication in its widest sense. That is the definition we use now in the literacy and numeracy strategy.

Mr Lunn: That was mentioned in our previous discussion with Sir Robert. I am glad to hear that. "Count, read; succeed" does not really cover it.

Mrs Godfrey: You are right; it is short hand.

Mrs Hale: Thank you, Katrina. You stated that schools have had three years to prepare for the levels of progression, and some schools have already taken part in a "shadow year". Having spoken to friends and family who teach, I know that those who work in Key Stage 2 are aware of the levels of progression and have been training for them, but those involved in Key Stage 3 are not aware of them and are quite anxious. How can we further support and inform teachers and parents that this is the way forward? If it actually is the way forward, is flexibility built into the scheme? Of particular concern for me are the Key Stage 3 teachers. They do not know about this, and we do not know which schools were involved in the shadow year. Can that information be passed on?

Mrs Godfrey: Dale will pick up on that. Post-primary schools were involved in the shadow year. Post-primary schools will have known about this for the same length of time as primary schools. One of the challenges for post-primary schools will be the fact that, in many cases, they tend to be more subject focused. That will have required them to look at this. Certainly, for children in year 10 now, when they went into year 8, those post-primary schools would have been told at that stage that those children would, at the end of year 10, be assessed against the levels of progression. Dale, do you want to say something about the pilot in post-primary schools?

Mr Dale Heaney (Department of Education): On the knowledge and communication that is needed going forward, we have agreed a communication plan with CCEA. We are keen to get that under way to ensure that the message is made clear to parents across each of the Key Stages. One thing we are keen on is for the rule to go ahead so that that communication can begin. Each of the Key Stages was involved.

You make an important point. It is part of our responsibility to ensure that the communication is made very simple and clear for parents. We recognise that that is important, given the complexities around all the issues and the potential for parents to get confused between what went before and what is now being put in place. That is a very important thing we need to do, and do quickly.

Mrs Godfrey: The other thing that came out when this was first talked about, and in the very early implementation of the revised curriculum in post-primary schools, was feedback about some of the early advice on the cross-curricular nature of the skills. Some of the very early advice seemed to have post-primary schools jumping through all sorts of strange hoops, where, all of a sudden, the technology teacher or maths teacher was required to assess communication. That did not make an awful lot of sense to anybody. In the literacy and numeracy strategy, we made a very clear point of saying that, in post-primary at Key Stage 3, we expect communication to be led by the English department and using maths to be led by the maths department. We also expect, as would happen in good schools anyway, communication between those and other departments. If you were introducing an aspect of maths, for example, in science or geography, there would be joint planning, so that the science teacher would teach it in a way that is consistent with how the maths teacher is approaching it and the sequencing of mathematical concepts would be introduced in a planned way. That is really important.

I would certainly be worried, Brenda, if there was still a level of confusion in post-primary schools. Dale is right: we would have to make sure that additional communication went out. In theory, at least, there should not be confusion, because the post-primary schools will have known for the same length of time as the primary schools that the changes were coming and that they had a lead-in period to get ready for them.

Mr Carl Savage (Department of Education): I was just going to make the point that all the post-primary schools have participated in the training.

Mrs Hale: Could the problem just be communication within schools themselves?

Mrs Godfrey: It could be. Schools are busy places. That could well be the case, and it is something that we will have to look at to make sure that everybody knows what is expected and not just some people.

The Deputy Chairperson: I welcome the University of Ulster students in the Gallery. They are studying planning. That is very good; we need lots of planning in everything we are involved in here. Today we are discussing whether to bring in a rule that brings forward an assessment system in schools to, if I understand it correctly, make sure that they are moderated so that every assessment in every school is the same and standard. If you talk to some teachers, they will tell you that that adds a large workload when they are already very busy. That is the problem we have to grapple with as a Committee.

Mr Rogers: You are welcome here again, Katrina. It took a little persistence from the Committee to get an oral briefing, but I have to say that, in answering anything we have asked you, you have been very thorough. I am somewhat disappointed that we did not get the evaluation report until we asked for it.

One or two things jump out at me from your report today, including the fact:

"Teachers themselves tell us that they do not currently have this confidence in the current arrangements which are entirely teacher-led."

I know we are not talking about computer-based assessment, but I find it very disturbing that people in the pilot have reported that the software is ineffective and time-consuming. It really concerns me that a system was rolled out to our already hard-pressed teachers and that that system was just not fit for purpose.

The paper also mentions support. Has a guidance document been produced for schools?

You mentioned the idea of visiting moderators. I read somewhere that there was a bit of opposition to that from the post-primary schools because a moderator would mean a teacher being out of school and away from his own post. Maybe you would like to comment on that, please.

Mrs Godfrey: Certainly there has been guidance and training. There has been training at different levels; training for principals and training for lead teachers. There has been the blend of training that CCEA talked about last week: some of it is online, and some of it is face to face. There absolutely has been guidance, and there will be more guidance if the Committee and others feel that that would

be a good thing. The easiest thing in the world is to have plenty of communication to make sure that you are covering all your bases.

Mr Savage: There is a primary source of guidance for how the arrangements will operate, but even it states:

"Further guidance on the process of moderation will be available and will be issued separately."

So, non-statutory guidance is being developed, and it will sit alongside this. There are also all the resources that CCEA provides on the Northern Ireland Curriculum website.

Mrs Godfrey: The point you made about involving teachers in moderation is an interesting one, because, actually, there is a tension there. If you have a good teacher who is good at this, you may not want them to be out doing other things, yet, at a system level, our most credible trainers are the teachers who already do it well. They are the people who can best explain this. They can explain it to another teacher far better than someone who has not been in the classroom for a while. So, there is always that tension around how you make use of your really good practitioners when you know that, in many cases, they are the most effective communicators with other teachers but that there is a price to pay. There is a tension; I agree with you on that. However, if you have people who are good at it, it makes sense, at least at a system level, for them to be more involved in helping others to improve.

Mr Rogers: Bear with me, Chair. The guidance document refers to three or four pieces of work being taken from 10 to 17 pupils per cross-curricular theme. Will that be irrespective of the size of the school? If a school has 80 children, would you still take the work of between 10 and 17 pupils?

Mrs Godfrey: I think that that is why the range is there; it allows for different sizes of schools. The key thing is that, because the sample is random, it will give the assurance that the standards are being consistently applied in a school. I do not think that you need a huge sample to be able to determine that. You need a sample that is big enough to give you the assurance but not so big that it goes overboard. There would have to be some adjustment for the size of a school. If you have only one class in a year group, it might be at the lower end of the scale, whereas, if you have five classes, it might be at the higher end. The key thing is that the sample needs to be just big enough to allow you to see whether the standards are being applied consistently. It should not be excessive.

Mr Rogers: That will put even more pressure on our small schools. I talked before about the 28 children in a joint P3 and P4 class in a school. If 14 children in that school are involved in this, you are liable to have to send 10 portfolios, whereas in a much bigger school with three classes, you would only have to send 17. I think that that will place a lot of pressure on our schools, particularly the smaller ones.

Mrs Godfrey: If it would be helpful, we could take that back and provide further clarity to the Committee on the range and on the relationship between the range and the size of the school. Again, the provision of the sample should not make any difference to teachers because they will have to do the assessment anyway. All the sample involves is collecting the stuff that they have already done and sending it off. It should not add to the assessment burden in any way because, by law, they already have to carry out that assessment. It will just be a case of looking at a sample in order to satisfy everybody. Interestingly, that was the point that I heard most from teachers: they felt that they were doing it right, but they were not sure whether everybody was doing it the same way.

Mr Rogers: At the end of Key Stage 1, for example, many primary schools use exercise books to keep all the work together, so those may now have to be photocopied. It is different at Key Stage 3 because students at that level have better organisation skills, and so on.

Finally, there was considerable funding for the shadow year. Will there be any funding for that in the future?

Mrs Godfrey: Yes, because this will have to be an integral part of the professional support for teachers. You will know that assessment is as important as any other requirement under the curriculum. It is through assessment that you determine how effective the teaching and learning have been and how you can use that to improve in the future. So, the wider programme of professional support for teachers, schools leaders and school governors will have to include an assessment dimension. The follow-up when moderation is working well and when teachers need extra support will

also have to be there, and we are very clear that this cannot be something in a box labelled assessment for which training is provided and then stopped. It has to be integrated into the professional support programme that will be available to teachers, middle managers and school leaders. It has to continue and do so in an integrated way, so that if you have a development day on literacy how you assess literacy should be part of that and not separate from it.

Mr Lunn: I am curious about this "moderation", about which, to be honest, I do not pretend to know anything. There seems to be a notion that teachers should act as moderators on the activities of other teachers. Does that find favour in the teaching profession? Take the legal profession: even if you try, you will not get a lawyer to sue another lawyer; it does not happen. That is why we have a Law Society. In this case, you have a training inspectorate. Where does that fit in? Why is there a need for this extra workload on teachers — if it is going that way — to moderate on other teachers?

Mrs Godfrey: I do not think that we would force it on a teacher. However, for their professional development, teachers who are told that they are doing something very well may get a great deal out of supporting other teachers. A key element of it, as well, is the internal standardisation that takes place in a school. Therefore when all the teachers get together to look at how they reach views on assessment and pupils' outcomes, they will be discussing that as a professional community in the school as well. That internal standardisation, Carl, turned out to be one of the really positive aspects of the trial, because, as you said earlier —

Mr Savage: Yes; in the shadow year that was something that schools definitely did not want to see lost in the process. They had all consistently found the process of internal standardisation valuable. Again, that is built into these documents.

Mr Lunn: Yes; I understand that, but —

Mrs Godfrey: You also asked, Trevor, about the inspectorate. The key role for the inspectorate, which it will do naturally and which you will see featured in its reports, is routinely to look at how teachers assess and how they use assessment information to improve teaching and learning and to give feedback to pupils and parents. In inspection reports you will often see a comment on how assessment is managed, how it has taken place in the school, and how effective it is. That is a key role that the inspectorate would play as part of the routine inspection of a school.

Mr Lunn: The phrase that I often hear used to describe teachers these days is "fed up". They are fed up with the workload, the bureaucracy and all the layers of stuff being piled on them, when all they want to do is be allowed to get back to basics and teach. What do the teaching unions think? Have they made their opinions clear?

Mrs Godfrey: On two levels, and I think that you have seen it yourselves in some of the communication to the Committee. When we were working up the policy on how we thought we should set standards and assess pupils, the unions were closely involved. I have to say that they played a very constructive role in helping to shape the policy.

There are those who have an issue with whether it is necessary to assess the level or reach outcomes for pupils in the first place; some are of the view that you do not need to measure. The Department's policy position is that in core areas that are important to society and the economy here — literacy, numeracy and, increasingly, ICT — it thinks that pupil progress should be measured and reported. That policy is in common with many other high-performing countries across the world, where priority areas are looked at and checked to see how pupils are doing, which tells you how your system is doing. It is fair to say that views differ on the need to assess and report on children in the first place.

However, once Ministers decide that, for various reasons, assessment is a good thing to do in a small number of areas and on a small number of occasions formally in a child's education, the issue becomes one of how. With the unions and other education bodies and practitioners, we looked at various models. Primarily, we looked at teacher assessment, which is what we have at the moment. That did not find favour for the reasons that I mentioned, because everyone was convinced that they were the only ones doing it right. We looked at external testing, because that is a very simple way of checking. However, from an educational perspective, when you look at the evidence you cannot see any benefit in testing, as it takes the teacher out of the equation altogether. We agreed to keep the teacher at the centre to do the assessment, as their competence framework already requires them to assess pupils anyway. However, the checks and balances, if you like, would be that a small sample of

pupils' work would be moderated to check that the standard was being applied consistently. That is the rationale behind it.

Leaving aside the debate on whether or not you should be setting and measuring standards, the levels of progression themselves have not generated any particular concern. Even the communication that you have had from the unions says that that would be a secondary issue, the key thing being the point that the Chair and Sean referred to. Change creates uncertainty and concern and, inevitably, requires you to do things differently, which requires you to take longer doing them or to look at them in a different way. That is where the primary concern is; it is why we delayed it for a couple of years; it is why we trialled and piloted it. We have been trying to get the balance right between not continuing with an unsatisfactory arrangement for any longer than is necessary and not rushing into something until we have tried it. That is the balance that we want to strike.

Mr Lunn: Does that mean that we are moving more towards assessment and away from testing? What has happened to the end-of-term and end-of-year examinations?

Mrs Godfrey: As those here who are parents will know, those are still a common feature in post-primary schools. For most forms of assessment and in most areas of the curriculum, we delegate to schools. It is for teachers and principals as professionals to decide what works well for them. Assessment is what teachers do anyway. We have decided that, in three areas and at three points in a child's schooling, we feel the need to step in with a system that provides not just information for the teacher and the pupil but something that allows us all to see how our children are progressing and improving and how the system is doing. That is the balance that you try to strike. Everybody recognises that the more you can sensibly leave in the hands of professionals, the better. The system keeps the teacher at the centre of assessment, but, at three points in a child's education, allows us all to stop and look at how the system as a whole is doing. That is the balance.

Mr Lunn: When is the third point?

Mrs Godfrey: Key stage 3. The three points are the end of P4, the end of P7 and the end of year 10.

Mrs Dobson: Trevor has just stolen my question, which you have elaborated on. He has beaten me to it. I was going to ask you about the unions, as they have raised serious concerns about your proposals. I know that those were raised with you during the Committee meeting on 3 October. Are you taking those concerns seriously? I know that you sort of answered that on Trevor's point.

Mrs Godfrey: Yes. The unions raised two sets of concerns. The first half of the document that you have relates to computer-based assessment, which is not the issue that we are talking about today, although I know that the Committee will want to come back to it. If we need to talk further to the unions to provide assurance to them so that they can provide assurance to their members, we will certainly do that.

The key thing is the balance to be struck. Do we want a system that puts literacy and numeracy at its heart and that has a robustness at certain key points? If we do, what is the best way to go about that? That is why we have got to where we are, because of the balance, which I talked about earlier with Trevor, and because we are trying to make sure that this is workable. As I said, change brings concerns and the need to stop and look. However, as we feel that literacy and numeracy are important for children, our society and our economy, the position that the Minister has adopted is that we want assurance at certain key points as to how our children are progressing. That is very much part of this. However, we cannot lose sight of the important fact that it is not just about that assurance. First and foremost, it is about helping pupils to improve, helping parents to engage in the education of their children, and helping teachers, when they take on a new class, to see where the strengths and areas for improvement are and to adapt their teaching and learning so that every child can achieve their full potential. There are three audiences when we talk about this: the pupil, the parent and the teacher; the school, because a school management team will want to look at how progress is being made; and the system. We cannot focus so much on the system level that we lose sight of the central purpose of assessment, which is always to improve teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils.

Mrs Dobson: I take you back to a point that Danny touched on earlier and which Trevor stole. It is true that those ideas can look great in the Department and make sense on paper, but when you ask a teacher they say: "Stop; no more policies. Let us get on and teach." Can you expand on the engagement and feedback from teachers?

Mrs Godfrey: First, I will deal with the policy. When developing the policy we had engagement primarily with teachers through the General Teaching Council and teaching unions. However, we also had engagement with people in the education and library boards and practitioners. When working up the policy, I spent a great deal of time talking directly to principals to find out their views. That was at the policy development stage. At the trial stage, and right the way through, teachers were involved, not just in trialling but in writing and road-testing the guidance.

Dale, you might want to pick up on the point about piloting and trialling.

Mr Heaney: It is clear from CCEA's response to the INTO letter that teachers were involved throughout the process. As Katrina said, at the initiation stage and through the trialling process, teachers were asked for their views. It is clear from some of the documentation that you will have seen that there was a tension between the views of the primary-school sector and those of the post-primary sector. That tension was around what felt appropriate, how much moderation there should be in the system if there is a lack of confidence in the current arrangements, and what that might look like in practice. You will have seen the compromise on timescales, allowing schools two more weeks, for example, over the time taken to submit their portfolios. That was as a direct result of the feedback that CCEA got from teachers, who said that they needed more time to complete the process. Teachers were involved and were listened to, and we are keen to continue that debate. CCEA continues to listen to teachers to see how, in practice, they could be more supported throughout the initial year and whether there are any other adjustments that we can make — for instance, in the moderation timescales, and so on — to provide that extra support.

Mr Savage: To add to what Dale said, one key example from the shadow year was that CCEA investigated with the schools a lighter-touch moderation that would allow them to move the timescales and make the information going back and forward less of a burden, for want of a better word, on schools. The key thing to come back from the schools was that that would not be robust. The feedback from the schools was that, with a light touch, robustness would be lost and there would be no confidence in the outcomes. The idea was not fit for purpose. That is an example of the kind of dialogue that we encourage CCEA to have and the effect that it has.

Mrs Godfrey: The key thing behind your point is that we should not stop that dialogue. It is important, as you implement the system, to keep channels of communication open and remain open to making amendments. You are absolutely right. It would be inappropriate for us to allow CCEA to stop just because implementation has started. We have to keep the process going and be open. I would like to think that the example that you gave is hypothetical. However, if we found that, in practice, this was not delivering the outcomes that it is designed to deliver, we have to be open to listening and responding and to telling people how we have responded. There is no point in listening if you do not feed back what you are going to do about it. You would, quite reasonably, expect us to make sure that that is a continuing feature over the initial years of implementation.

Mrs Dobson: I am just concerned that pressing ahead without support or without listening to teachers could be detrimental to education and result in lower standards. It is important to keep listening and to take on board what teachers are telling you.

Mrs Godfrey: I know that the Minister is due to have further discussion with teachers' unions on issues that relate to assessment, among others things; that will give us another opportunity to hear their concerns and solutions. That will not be our only channel of communication because we have to be open to hearing from schools of different levels and parents about whether they find that useful.

Mr Hazzard: Thanks for the briefing. At the previous meeting at which we deliberated on that decision, I voiced concerns over continuing to stall on making a decision so that the system could address urgent educational issues, such as attainment and absenteeism. Indeed, having looked through the paper on the implications of not progressing, I have to say that I share some of those concerns. Growing up, I was taught that making no decision was often worse than making the wrong decision. I feel that that is what we are seeing here. We are creating confusion by not advancing the decision that we need to make. What would be the cost of failing to implement?

Mrs Godfrey: Cost would be incurred on several fronts. First, I suppose that there would be a cost due to lack of return on investment that was made to get ready for the new system. We would have to

put arrangements in place to remind teachers and schools what the old arrangements were so that they could apply them.

A bigger cost would be incurred by continuing with a system that everybody thinks could be improved. We would continue with standards that predate the revised curriculum and which do not have the application-of-knowledge element that the levels of progression are designed to introduce. We would continue with a system in which, leaving literacy and numeracy aside for a moment, we would have ICT as a statutory area in the curriculum but no method by which to assess pupils' progress in it. Pupils would be required to be taught and required, by law, to be assessed, but we would not have a regime to do that, so we would have to put something else in place.

If we are doing this because we believe that it makes clear the sorts of things that we expect pupils to be able to do at certain Key Stages, helping them to achieve those things will help them to achieve outcomes in literacy and numeracy. That is the key point. Therefore, the bigger cost is probably impossible to measure at this point. It could be the cost of not implementing fully the literacy and numeracy strategy and the consequences for a considerable period after that.

How do you put a figure on that? Through incurring such costs, we would have lost the benefit from the investment. There would also be longer-term costs.

The Deputy Chairperson: I note that the paper that you have given us states that we need to make the above order before the end of the calendar year. Do we have to make a decision today or do we have time?

Mrs Godfrey: It is in your hands, Chair. It is the Committee's role to scrutinise appropriately and come back to us. We would like to be able to make the order and have it in place so that if we had to move the goal posts suddenly, we could give schools plenty of notice. We would like the order to be made so that it would take effect by the end of the calendar year at the latest. However, you will know that the earlier we give certainty to schools, the better. If there is a question of our having to move the goal posts, we would really need to tell them. If there are specific areas that, after deliberation, the Committee wants to raise, I suspect that, as I said at the outset, they are probably more likely to be in the official documents than in the order itself. Rather than have a conversation about concerns but no solutions, if there were solutions that the Committee was minded to suggest, we would certainly want to take a look and report back to you with the Minister's position on them.

The Deputy Chairperson: Thanks very much, Dale, Carl and Katrina.