

Public Accounts Committee

Oral evidence: Funding for disadvantaged pupils, HC 327

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Members present: Meg Hillier (Chair); Mr Richard Bacon; Deidre Brock; Kevin Foster; Mr Stewart Jackson; Clive Lewis; Nigel Mills; Teresa Pearce; Stephen Phillips; John Pugh; Karin Smyth; Mrs Anne-Marie Trevelyan

Sue Higgins, Executive Leader, Adrian Jenner, Director, Parliamentary Relations, Dr Tim Phillips, Director, Education Value for Money, National Audit Office; and Marius Gallaher, Alternate Treasury Officer of Accounts, were in attendance.

Witnesses: Dame Sharon Hollows, Headteacher, Charter Academy, and Alexis Widdowson, Principal, Berwick Academy, gave evidence.

Chair: Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to first-time visitors to the Public Accounts Committee and the House of Commons. Before we begin formal proceedings, I need to deal with declarations of interest from the Committee. I need to declare that my husband is a non-executive director of Prospect, which sometimes wins contracts from the Department for Education to carry out Ofsted inspections and the like.

Mrs Trevelyan: I am a governor of Berwick Academy school.

Clive Lewis: I am a governor of a local authority school and am also involved in the Anti-Academies Alliance.

Karin Smyth: My husband is a school business manager.

Q1 Chair: A very warm welcome to our two headteachers: Dame Sharon Hollows, head of the Charter Academy in Portsmouth, and Alexis Widdowson from Berwick Academy. My thanks to you both for travelling here, particularly to Alexis who has come a very long way for a short hearing. We aim to finish this section between 1.30 and 1.40. I think you have had the briefing, but I want to

hear from you as a prelude to our hearing with the Department for Education. We want to hear what it is like for you as practitioners working on the ground with the pupil premium, which is the subject of our hearing today. Perhaps you will both make an opening statement about your schools for those who do not have the brief in front of them and are watching on television. How do you feel the pupil premium is working for you on the ground? I will start with Dame Sharon.

Dame Sharon Hollows: Charter Academy is in one of the poorest parts of the country: 62% of our students are pupil premium students. In other words, their parents do not work and they are very disadvantaged on low income. We are also the most improved school in the country and there is a gap of only 1% between pupil premium students and non-pupil premium students.

Alexis Widdowson: We were comparing our schools outside. They are very similar. Mine is a rural maritime school of about the same size with 700 pupils. The difference is that it has a large rural catchment as well as a maritime location. The level of unemployment in the local area is quite high compared with the rest of the UK. In some ways, it is two schools within one: 50% of my children come from households where there is a high level of engagement in higher education among parents—about 25%—and 50% of them come from households where there is a low level of parental involvement in higher education. So in some ways it is a school with two personalities.

Q2 Chair: We are here today to discuss the National Audit Office Report, which you have not had a chance to look at, about how the pupil premium is working and how the Government are making sure it is actually delivering for the pupils concerned. Dame Sharon, we have read headlines about the initiatives that you are using it for, and we are keen to hear from practitioners about how you use the money, whether you like the freedom you get from the Department, how you monitor its use and how you feed that back to the Department. That is a lot of questions in one go; forgive me. Perhaps you could give us a flavour of what you are doing. Dame Sharon first, then Alexis Widdowson.

Dame Sharon Hollows: First, our pupil premium spending is driven by the fact that we know every individual child and every individual family very well. We watch them constantly because their needs change as time goes on. We spend the pupil premium money in many different ways. Some of it is spent on transport and staff to get the children who do not attend into school. We spend money on food, homework clubs and supervised homework. We spend money on hygiene facilities for cleanliness of clothes as well as bodies. We also spend money on enabling children to go on trips if their parents cannot afford to send them. In other words, we spend our money on anything that our parents find it difficult to provide. They vary enormously. Some of our most disadvantaged parents feed their children well and have extremely clean homes and children, but we cater for a broad range.

In terms of the freedom, I very much appreciate the freedom. To take away the freedom of spending the pupil premium funding would be a great disadvantage to schools. I have no doubt whatever that we were able to achieve what we achieved because we spent the money in line with the needs of our children. Their needs are wide ranging and varied, and the needs of another school could be very different indeed, so that freedom is extremely important to us.

Alexis Widdowson: I agree absolutely with that. The value of the pupil premium strategy is that it actually promotes the idea of personalised strategies for children, and you need to look at the individual needs of every child who is registered for pupil premium in order to identify what they need. We similarly are spending our money on literacy, numeracy, attendance, aspiration, and SEN additionality. A high proportion of our pupil premium students also have special educational needs.

What we are not spending our money on is important, but is having an impact: mentoring programmes, for example. Peer-to-peer mentoring programmes cost me not a penny, but have a significant impact on the attainment of pupil premium students. It is important to make a distinction between the strategy for distributing funds to schools and the impact it has on schools if you allocate the money and tell them that you want them to explain how that money is having an impact. In my mind, it is the scrutiny that is encouraging headteachers to think very carefully about what they give to pupil premium students and not the actual sums of money being allocated.

Q3 Chair: Do you think that that scrutiny is strong? The NAO Report says that in some ways it is difficult to know how well it is working when something goes wrong. Have either of you ever brought in the Education Endowment Foundation to do any work with you?

Alexis Widdowson: We are using some of the strategies that have been outlined by the EEF. You would be very foolish not to. Nobody ever got shot for buying IBM strategy. If it is in the toolkit, you need to justify why you are not using it. Every school needs to have that freedom to be able to identify what their individual children need.

Q4 Chair: Dame Sharon, have you used the Education Endowment Foundation's toolkit, and do you feel that you are held to account for how that money is being spent?

Dame Sharon Hollows: We are just about to use the toolkit. We have looked into it and it looks like a really useful tool, so we will be using it. It is very helpful that schools are held to account. Every good school looks for value for money, but when you are working on school improvement, as I do sometimes, it really helps to be able to point out that schools will be held to account. It is a supportive driver to school improvement.

Q5 Chair: Has either of you recently had an Ofsted inspection where that has been looked at?

Dame Sharon Hollows: We had a pilot Ofsted inspection last year. It was looked at through the new framework. I found that very useful personally, in helping me to establish value for money.

Q6 Chair: One of the questions we will be asking the permanent secretary concerns monitoring. At the moment Ofsted is the main tool. When a school is not doing very well with it there is then a recommendation that the school gets support, but that support isn't always brought in by schools. As practising heads out there, do you think there could be a better way, or do you think the way that is there is working well but needs a bit of oomph behind it? What is your

assessment, particularly from talking to colleagues in your region? I don't know whether you have a wider perspective—although I know that you do, Dame Sharon.

Alexis Widdowson: Our last Ofsted report stated that the pupil premium gap was closing, but not fast enough, which the leadership of the school recognised. We have subsequently felt that we were not having enough impact on pupil premium students, so we commissioned on our own accord a pupil premium audit by one of the recommended providers. We have found it to be an enormously valuable exercise, just because the process of scrutinising our school, asking what we are doing, collecting the information and talking about what we are doing with teachers has been very valuable for highlighting some of the remaining issues. It has revitalised our strategies on pupil premium. I am now a great advocate of pupil premium audits, which I know are being recommended as an outcome for schools that are considered to be in special measures. Again, I feel that it should be led by the headteacher; if a headteacher feels that they are not making an impact, it is one of the tools in their toolkit that will allow them to improve.

Q7 Chair: Of course, under the current system you did not have to have that audit; you chose to do it.

Alexis Widdowson: No, we chose to do it.

Q8 Chair: Do you think there will be any merit in applying more pressure on schools? It is extra public money going into schools for a particular end: for pupils who are disadvantaged. Do you think it is enough that it is left to heads to make that decision?

Alexis Widdowson: Absolutely. I am all in favour of there being even more pressure on headteachers, because clearly there is not enough already.

Q9 Chair: Seriously, it is not mandatory. Some schools could be Ofsted-inspected and there could be a finding that they have not been spending their pupil premium as effectively as they could; but then they could just not have the audit. What do you feel about whether there should be any pressure on schools that do not want to do the audit?

Alexis Widdowson: I think it would be right to pressure a school to use an audit. I cannot understand why any head teacher would not want to use that audit. If they have an issue that their pupil premium gap is not closing, why would anyone not want to take advantage of a pupil premium audit? The issue they will have is the issue we had, which is that in our local area there is only one person who can provide that. I happen to be lucky enough to have a personal relationship with that person, because I was already working with my school to improve it in other areas. I suspect that where headteachers are being recommended to do a pupil premium audit and are not doing it, that is because they are struggling to find somebody who can carry out that audit for them. If you want to encourage it to happen more frequently, you need to find more practitioners who can actually carry out the audit.

Q10 Chair: Dame Sharon, do you have anything to add to that?

Dame Sharon Hollows: I agree that schools should have to carry out the audit. To guide this, we won the pupil premium prize this year and we have had lots of visitors. The schools who visited and were trying to analyse what they do with pupil premium and trying to find a way forward were the good schools—the schools that are already using that money well. We have had no visits from schools that are not doing very well.

Chair: That is interesting.

Q11 Clive Lewis: Do you agree that it would be a good idea to have some kind of framework for schools? Clearly, not all schools and not all headteachers will be as distinguished as yourselves. Different schools will have different abilities to conduct audits or look for those audits. Perhaps a small piece of regulation setting out some kind of best practice would be welcome. This could set a minimum bar for how schools spend the pupil premium.

Dame Sharon Hollows: I think some schools would benefit from those benchmarks, and perhaps there are some schools which would even welcome guidance on how to spend the pupil premium. However, once schools make it clear that they are able to make those decisions for themselves, they should be allowed to do so. We need a mixed economy.

Alexis Widdowson: You need to be very careful not to assume that in every school where there is a pupil premium gap that is not closing, that is because the people concerned are not trying to do something about it. We have to recognise that this social problem has existed for 1,000 years in this country, and we are not going to close the gap overnight. In some areas the issues that lead to that gap may be easy to address, and in other areas they may be very, very difficult to address. For example, in a rural school such as mine, there will be people who intend to enter a part of the labour market where no one could care less whether or not they have achieved five A* to C grades. To address the reasons why that child will not attend school is a materially different problem from an issue with a child in an inner-city environment who is involved with drugs. There you might address the issue of that child's non-attendance because of drug misuse in a very different way. We need to be very cautious about branding schools which have a gap which is not closing as somehow failing. We need to recognise that the schools themselves will understand why that gap exists, why it is not closing and what they need to do about it.

Q12 Clive Lewis: I do not think that this is about whether a school is failing because of that gap, but simply about setting a bare minimum standard. Public money is being spent. I understand the concept of free schools and academies and giving them autonomy, but I think that there is a role for this as a bare minimum for public funds and best practice. This does not necessarily have to smother schools' ability to act independently and use best practice themselves. It can be a bare minimum of best practice which sets a minimum standard for that money and how it is used.

Alexis Widdowson: Again, I would understand that approach if you felt that the pupil premium money being given to schools was some sort of additional funding that was being squandered. In reality, that is not the case. The sum of money allocated to schools has remained essentially the same, but the way it has been allocated has changed. The pupil premium funding has

been ring-fenced. Schools have been told, “Look, you used to have £100 to spend on your pupils, but now you have £90 to spend on these pupils and £10 to spend on those. We want you to account for how you are spending that £10.”

Schools have been asked to disinvest from certain strategies and reinvest in new strategies. Schools have been doing that and they are effective at that, and it is not the case that schools have been given this extra money and some schools are just squandering it. The fact is that every headteacher is scratching their head every minute of every day working out how to get the best value for their children across the piece. Effectively, schools have been asked to focus much more keenly on a group of students, and in that respect there is nothing like putting money behind something to make people focus. It has been highly effective for that reason.

Q13 John Pugh: You both have schools with very significant elements of deprivation. Can I take it that, in the funding agreements you have with the Department for Education, there is no other recognition of that apart from the pupil premium? Is it solely the pupil premium?

Alexis Widdowson: Yes.

Dame Sharon Hollows: Yes.

Q14 John Pugh: I wanted to clarify that point first. Following on from that, there is often a dilemma when you get money per capita or per pupil, which is essentially what the pupil premium is. This is whether to spend it on a specific intervention or on some sort of general aspect of school education, which may have a differential effect on pupils who are deprived. That is far less of a dilemma for you, isn't it? You say it is 62% of pupils, so almost anything you do will benefit large numbers of deprived pupils.

Following on from another remark you made, which did intrigue me, if you looked honestly at the money you get per pupil and looked directly at what you did for individual children—and you make the point that some deprived children come from very good, supportive homes where children are turned out clean and well fed but others do not—despite the fact that you get a certain sum of money per capita, do you know or can tell that you spend far more than the individual pupil premium in special help for some children and possibly far less in other cases?

Dame Sharon Hollows: Yes, we probably do spend far more in some cases than in others. We spend more at certain times than at other times. For instance, if a deprived family has had a bereavement, we would spend more on counselling for that family, so it fluctuates for each family and each child.

Q15 John Pugh: But that is a one-off. Over their school career, certain children are going to require more than the pupil premium for you to give them the same chance as others. Some students who qualify for the pupil premium will not require much extra help.

Dame Sharon Hollows: All of our children require extra help, and we have proved by having this 1% differential, that pupil premium children are able to achieve the same standards—in fact, standards that are better than many children across the country. However, the way in which we got there is different. What we need to give to each individual child is very different for our pupil premium children and our other children. Every one of those pupil premium families has barriers, but the barriers are different for each family. Yes, some of those barriers are more expensive to overcome than others, but we have other money to spend on our children besides the pupil premium. We do not raid the pupil premium for one child to spend on another, but simply spend more of our available income from the rest of the per capita funding.

Alexis Widdowson: I think that you measure the efficacy of the strategy by the outcome, not by the cost of the input, which is why it is right that schools are being scrutinised for the outcomes of pupil premium students. In RAISE now, all schools' pupil premium figures are reported separately, so you can start to see the stark contrast between the performance of pupil premium students and their non-pupil premium peers. You can have two very different strategies with the same input; in fact, I will give you an example of two that I have used this year. In one case, I had a student who was a young carer who had to go home to look after a disabled mother, and for that student, the most effective thing that I could do was buy him a bicycle. Another student was failing to attain because he felt that he had made the wrong choices at GCSE; the most valuable strategy that I could use to persuade that child to continue and persevere with his GCSEs in order to get him to A-level was provide him with a music mentor. It cost me nothing to get somebody to volunteer to give one lad three hours of music tuition that really inspired him. It cost me quite a lot more to buy a bicycle, but the outcome is the same. I have two students who have been persuaded to stick at their studies, because they want to go on to study at sixth form. As far as I am concerned, the output is what I really value, not how much it cost me to get there.

Dame Sharon Hollows: We do spend more on some children than on others while they are at school, but that makes them employable, so they cost society less when they leave school. If they become employable because we spend a little bit extra, that has to be a good indicator of value for money.

Q16 John Pugh: If you are spending a great deal more of the pupil premium on certain categories of very disadvantaged pupils—I am not saying that there should be a premium-plus—you could argue for a more narrowly directed form of spending, couldn't you?

Dame Sharon Hollows: You could argue for that; I think it would be impossible to implement, because the need changes almost by the week.

Q17 Chair: According to some figures only one third of schools complied with reporting about annual use of funds in the past school year. You know better than us how difficult it is to record and report back on how you are using the money. Does the system work easily for people in your position? Could it be improved?

Alexis Widdowson: I think it is getting easier.

Q18 Chair: Talk us through how it works, so that we have a flavour of it.

Alexis Widdowson: You will find that, in previous years, it was an issue that if you were asking people to report, then they would have had to have prepared their budgets with a separate way of accounting for the pupil premium, so I think it was probably a little rough and ready. As schools are becoming aware of the fact that they need to account for exactly how they are spending the money, more schools are accounting in a way that makes it easier for them to provide a detailed breakdown of how the money has been spent. Certainly, that is the case in my school.

Q19 Chair: How would you record the bicycle? It seems like a very rational thing in a rural area. How do you prove that value for money?

Alexis Widdowson: We have identified strategies that we are using. The bicycle would go into a strategy around aspiration. So for us, one of the key issues for many pupil premium students is that they lack the aspiration of their non-pupil-premium peers. I would put that under aspiration because what it essentially does is to persuade that child that they can both fulfil their needs as a young carer and also continue to commit to their studies. It has happened to go into that pot. I am not sure that I would report it in any more detail on my website. That to me would be sufficient detail.

Q20 Chair: Dame Sharon, do you have anything to add to that?

Dame Sharon Hollows: Our indicators are very measurable. We use attendance and students' achievements. Students' achievements are as measured over six weeks.

Q21 Chair: Wow. That is a pretty clear indication. I had one final question. If you were sitting in the Permanent Secretary's position and were taking this policy forward in terms of assuring taxpayers about accountability and value for money, what would you do? If I were a parent at your school and I wanted to know how you were spending the money, how would I be able to hold you to account? What would you do at the national level and what would a parent be able to do to see how their tax money is being spent?

Dame Sharon Hollows: At national level, although there has been lots of talk about how to change the measure from the very rough measure of free school meals, I personally cannot think of a better one so I would stick with that measure. As a parent, I would look at the website—which may mean a lot to some parents—and I would ask someone to show me around the school and physically show me the impact of that pupil premium money.

Q22 Chair: If we looked on your website—which I have not, but should have—would we be able to tell how you are spending it?

Dame Sharon Hollows: I think you would have a fairly good idea.

Q23 Chair: You have a lot of publicity about yours so I guess that you are perhaps not the right person to ask. Alexis?

Alexis Widdowson: I am delighted to say that I recently had a governance audit as well and the person carrying out that audit said that they felt our pupil premium statement was one of the best they had seen. That surprised and delighted me, to give you a measure.

My recommendation would be that the pupil premium strategy should continue. There is a danger that, because it is a very embedded problem, people will be frustrated by the length of time it takes to see impact and I would discourage people from abandoning the strategy for that reason. I think that it is the right strategy and it will take 20 years to see the full impact, but we should keep doing it because there is no doubt in my mind that my school has focused far more on the students who need our support most as a result of this strategy.

Q24 Mr Jackson: I declare an interest because of my constituency interests in this subject. Pupils with English as an additional language have increased by 21% across the UK in the last four years. There are now 1.2 million children who are EAL. You did not mention it; in fairness you were not asked to. What is your view on that, given that pupil premium since it was first thought of a number of years ago has evolved to take into account services, children, pupil premium-plus and so on? Is there a case to be made that EAL is sufficiently draining on resources and has an impact on attainment and so it could also be incorporated in the future into the pupil premium criteria?

Alexis Widdowson: I personally do not feel qualified to answer on that, because I do not have many EAL students in Berwick-upon-Tweed, although some of them speak Scots, and the Berwick dialect is also very broad, but I am not an expert on EAL. However, I certainly understand the question.

Q25 Mr Jackson: Geordie is not an additional language. Portsmouth must be more of an area where this is an issue.

Dame Sharon Hollows: We are about 20%, which I personally consider low, because I have always worked in London before. I would not include EAL, because EAL children help to raise achievement because they bring with them aspiration and our greatest battle in poor white areas is aspiration—some of my friends are not going to talk to me anymore.

Mr Jackson: You can say that with 20%—you wait until it gets to 50% and you might not take the same philosophical approach.

Chair: We are in danger of digressing.

Q26 Clive Lewis: My question is a bit about Stewart's point, but obviously disadvantaged children defined by free school meals is quite a narrow definition. It is anecdotal, but I know that at some schools children with special educational needs do not receive the attention that they should do because it is a zero-sum game and the focus again has been very narrowly on free school meals, so the children with special educational needs also suffer. Is that something you can envision as the system currently works?

Dame Sharon Hollows: I think one would see that happen in a school where the leadership was weak and it was not driven to meet individual needs of all children, no matter what those needs were. So I think it is a leadership issue rather than a pupil premium issue.

Q27 Deidre Brock: Following on from Meg's comment about parents, the Report notes that parents of disadvantaged pupils are unlikely to hold a school to account for the use of the pupil premium, so what measures are you taking to encourage those parents get involved in the scrutiny of the school and its use of that premium?

Dame Sharon Hollows: For us, it is encouraging parents to come in as much as possible, which of course is harder in secondary schools, but we do get the parents in. We have a strong parent council who we discuss pupil premium with and we also are introducing cookery classes for parents where they are going to be able to cook a meal which is going to cost £5 for a family, rather than buy takeaway food. It will be a good experience—bringing the parents in will help us to gain access to parents and help parents to gain skills and have a good social experience. That is just one example; there are many.

Alexis Widdowson: You are absolutely right to highlight that as a major issue. Parental engagement is one of the key parts of our development plan, because we consider it to be so powerful. We have appointed a communications officer, which is a very unusual role to have within a school. It is an acting teacher, but it is somebody who has taken on the role of challenging all the time whether or not our communication is effective for all parts of our parent base. But you are absolutely right that, particularly with pupil premium students, it is quite probable that the parents will not have time or will not value attending parents evenings, that they will not read the communications that are sent to them. So we have to be prepared to push that information rather than assuming that they are pulling it in the way that other parents may.

Q28 Chair: Thank you very much. Just one final question that I forgot to ask earlier about universal credit, which of course is coming down the line. Given that this funding is allocated on free school meal eligibility, have you had any discussions as school leaders about how you are going to measure it when universal credit comes down the line? Have you got any thoughts on that, because obviously we will be asking our next panel of witnesses about measurement?

Alexis Widdowson: I have to confess that preparing for this is the first time that I have given it any thought, and it is one of those things that I will take away as being an area that I think we do need to review in terms of whether it will make it harder for us to understand who our pupil premium children are.

Chair: We will send you a copy of our Report.

Alexis Widdowson: That would be lovely. Thank you very much indeed—I shall look forward to that.

Dame Sharon Hollows: We are very proactive in finding out who the pupil premium children are. We think that might complicate things—we are not sure; we have only just started thinking about it.

Chair: Okay. We will be challenging the permanent secretary on that. Can I thank very warmly Dame Sharon Hollows from Charter Academy in Portsmouth and Alexis Widdowson from Berwick Academy for coming all this way to give us some very useful insights into how challenging it is to be a school leader in any environment? Thank you for sharing your experiences of spending the pupil premium. You are very welcome to stay, or you may wish to rush back to Berwick and Portsmouth.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Juliet Chua, Director, Post 16 and Disadvantaged Group, Department for Education, Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive, Education Endowment Foundation, and Chris Wormald, Permanent Secretary, Department for Education, gave evidence.

Chair: Our witnesses for the main session are Chris Wormald, permanent secretary for the Department for Education, Juliet Chua, the director at the Department for Education responsible for this area of policy, and Sir Kevan Collins, chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, which got quite a number of name-checks in the previous session. I will hand straight over to our rapporteur for today's session, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, who will lead the questioning.

Q29 Mrs Trevelyan: Welcome, and thank you for coming to be witnesses for us. I think there is a strong view held by those in the profession, two of whom we have just been hearing from, and by the NAO Report that the pupil premium policy is broadly supported and is helping to provoke more focus and investment that will help pupils from disadvantaged families to make much more progress in their education.

While the NAO Report is broadly supportive of the policy's direction of travel, we are concerned by the findings, which indicate a lack of focused accountability and of a speedy increase of evidence base to determine this funding's effectiveness in the long term. Initially, the Report describes the reasons for the attainment gap as lower wages and higher unemployment. While we would probably agree that those are easily identifiable factors to grab hold of, is it not the case that the underlying reasons can be poor parental engagement with the child's school, perhaps due to their own poor experiences, and poor vocabulary and language skills by the time the children enter the school environment?

I am concerned that we are not challenging those root causes, because if we look at figure 1 in the Report, there is a huge disparity in the attainment gap between the different ethnicities. That really surprised me. My question to all of you is: why do you think that is the case? Are we targeting taxpayers' money effectively enough, given the huge differences that we can already see?

Chris Wormald: First, we very much welcomed this National Audit Office Report. We thought that it correctly identified where progress was being made and the challenges going forward, so we endorsed everything written in it. It is also an extremely timely Report, because the Government has a lot of decisions to take in the spending review and beyond about how it wishes to evolve this policy. We will be looking to pick up the lessons we have learned from the National Audit Office Report and hopefully this hearing in those deliberations. We are going into this with that attitude. It is important to say that although the pupil premium is by a long way our biggest intervention in this area, it is not the only thing that the Government is doing to tackle disadvantage. Successive Governments have put considerable resources into early years, a lot of which is about tackling those root causes.

Q30 Chair: I do not want to cut you off, permanent secretary, but we are trying to talk about the Report on the pupil premium today. We have quite a lot of expert members here who understand the other issues, so can we focus particularly on the pupil premium?

Chris Wormald: On the pupil premium specifically, we do not argue that it alone will solve all the challenges set out in figure 1 and elsewhere. We do, however, think that empowering school leaders in the way you described is an important contribution to that.

Juliet Chua: I would add that at the heart of the pupil premium policy is a recognition that giving schools clear accountability for pupils and the funding alongside it will enable them to come to judgments about the right types of intervention, which will tackle some of the root causes and enable them to do the sorts of parental engagement that will help to overcome barriers to learning.

Sir Kevan Collins: I would add—figure 1 sets this out quite clearly—that there are differences between children from different communities, but the difference within communities by virtue of the fact that you are a disadvantaged member of that community is far greater. Whichever community you come from, the fact that you come from a family of disadvantage has a huge bearing—we know this internationally as well—on children's attainment as they enter school.

Q31 Mrs Trevelyan: And yet the attainment gap is much smaller within some communities despite the disadvantage, which is measured on the same basis across the board.

Sir Kevan Collins: The issue that stands out is—I think it is called “white” in this group, which is where disadvantage seems to have a profound effect on outcomes, as opposed to some other communities where you do not see quite the same difference. There are a whole set of reasons for that, which we talked about earlier, and family is a key issue.

Q32 Mrs Trevelyan: Within that, are we capturing all the children? Numbers have gone up from 1.3 million children caught by the pupil premium in its first year to 2 million now and the NAO report indicates that there may be an 11% gap in the children who are not being identified. We have had some interesting evidence from the Carers Trust suggesting that children who are carers should also be included, regardless of their other financial family metrics, because they are children who are disadvantaged and need extra support. Do you think the policy is reaching all the children we need to be reaching?

Chris Wormald: Obviously, the 11% who are not claiming free school meals are a concern to us. I should say that that affects the distribution of the pupil premium, not the overall quantum. Where we have differential claimant rates between schools, that will mean that some schools are not getting the resources to which they are entitled. We are pleased that that number has been going down—it fell from 14%, I think, to 11%—and we are planning further work on exactly why it happens. We will open a dialogue with local authorities and schools where there seems to be a particularly high non-claimant rate.

Juliet Chua: As part of the work that brought the under-registration rate down, we looked closely at the process by which parents apply for free school meals, through the automated eligibility checking services and through very clear processes which would not get in the way of parents making claims. As the permanent secretary says, there is a group of local authorities that have relatively high rates of under-registration—we can target them, look at their processes and the reasons why they are seeing higher rates of under-registration.

Q33 Mrs Trevelyan: Are you doing that work now? Is it ongoing?

Juliet Chua: We have requested from DWP the most recent set of data from them and HMRC in order to look at overall claimant rates and match these against our school census. This will allow us to update the under-registration data and enable us to do more targeting.

Q34 Chair: How accurate is the data matching? We have seen issues in other areas of data matching in Government. For example, the child's surname may not be the same as the claiming parent's surname. Does that throw up anomalies? You cannot control what the DWP records are. Are there areas that need improvement to make sure we do not lose pupils from the pupil premium register because of free school meals registration?

Juliet Chua: We have done a number of audits to ensure that our school census information is accurate. We submitted that to the NAO as part of the process of this review and are looking closely at the returns, term on term, to spot, from a controls perspective, whether there are any variations or anomalies in that, and to test the accuracy. We are aligned to DWP and HMRC data and we are keeping that under review.

Chris Wormald: I should add that, as one of your previous witnesses said, free school meals is not the greatest measure in the world but it is the best we have. One reason we went for what is known as the Ever 6 definition for pupil premium was to ensure that we caught as many people as possible, particularly that category of pupil who might bounce in and out of free school meals and

therefore be right on the borderline. That is one reason why, in the original consultation about how we should measure, the Ever 6 measure came out as the one to use.

Q35 Mrs Trevelyan: A concern that we all have is that, with universal credit coming in some time next year for families across the board, we will face the question all over again of whether we are picking them all up. It will put a lot of pressure on headteachers to make sure that they are scooping everybody up. They may know, but if the framework of universal credit does not provide an easy support framework, will it be a problem to ensure that we catch those that we need to?

Chris Wormald: I will ask Juliet to comment on the detail because she has been having the discussions with DWP on this. I should say that any change to the benefits systems affects the free school meals system because it is a passported benefit. Universal credit is, of course, a particularly big change and the Government still have a lot of decisions to take about exactly how free school meals will work once universal credit is fully in place, because there will be a lot more universal credit claimants than there are current free school meal recipients. Juliet, would you like to add to that?

Juliet Chua: Obviously the shift from five benefits to the universal credit model means that the basis on which FSM is identified will no longer exist. What we will need to agree and identify is a new earnings threshold against which FSM will be identified. We are working with the DWP on that, as are other Departments that have passported benefits, such as prescription charges, and we will need to consult on that. Families currently receiving universal credit—the small number of families in the north-west where universal credit has already been rolled out—are eligible for FSM. FSM has been added to the current list of benefits. FSM eligibility has been put there. It is also worth pointing out that the Ever 6 measure provides a cushion for eligibility over time with any changes in the benefits system.

Chris Wormald: On the last part of your question, how eligibility works in future needs to be the Government's problem, not the problem of individual head teachers. I do not think we want to get to a situation where individual head teachers have to work out the interrelationship between FSM and universal credit. We will need to sort that out between the Department and the DWP.

Q36 Mrs Trevelyan: My concern is that perhaps the policy framework is not yet clear enough on monitoring the impact of the pupil premium going forward. While Ofsted can go in and do a review that might highlight, as we heard from the head of Berwick academy, whether the attainment gap is not shrinking quickly enough, there is no mandatory requirement to have a review and look at that fully. Do you think there is adequate oversight to ensure that the pupil premium is being used as effectively as it can be in each individual area and that heads who perhaps are not challenging themselves hard enough are being challenged to get the best value for money?

Chris Wormald: Again, I thought your two witnesses covered this point very successfully. There is a balance to be struck between the freedom that we want to give individual schools to deal with the challenges of their individual pupils and what we require nationally. That has evolved over time with the pupil premium, and we expect it to evolve further. Pupil premium reviews were introduced in 2013—that was two years in—and we will be looking at how the system works as we

go forward. Pupil premium reviews are advice to governors, not to Government. Our method of holding to account, as the Chair said in the pre-hearing, is a combination of Ofsted and national performance data. The pupil premium reviews are not part of our national accountability system; they are meant to be advice for schools on how to improve.

Where Ofsted is recommending pupil premium reviews, I think I am right in saying that the vast majority of those schools are ones that Ofsted is placing into a category, such as requires improvement, or into special measures. Our methods of intervention are about the whole school, not about the specific pupil premium bit, although—

Q37 Mrs Trevelyan: If only 37% are picking up that challenge when it has been highlighted and finding a reviewer—that is obviously a challenge—who can help them work harder on it, is that not something that the Department should be driving forward through Ofsted?

Chris Wormald: I will ask Juliet to comment on the fair challenge that the National Audit Office made on the availability of reviewers and how there were not enough. We have been doing some things on that. We believe that the right level of intervention is at the whole-school level. If that school is not being managed properly—part of that may be how it deals with disadvantaged pupils—we should be using our general school accountability measures, rather than have a separate set of interventions for the pupil premium. Juliet, do you want to say a bit about pupil premium reviews?

Juliet Chua: There are a number of mechanisms by which a review may happen. Ofsted can trigger it. It is clear through the guidance that if that happens, the school is expected to have started a review within two weeks and to have completed it within six weeks. There can be follow-up through the regional schools commissioner, the local authority or Ofsted. Ofsted will expect to see it, because it does a follow-up.

In addition to that, a review might take place because it has been recommended by a regional schools commissioner or the local authority. Alternatively, a school might choose to do it as a good thing, and we had a nice example of that earlier. Having the right capacity in place to help those reviews take place and be effective is critical in this, as is having a good, independent expert who knows what the right interventions will be for a school in its specific circumstances. The NAO rightly picked up that this was an area that we needed to strengthen and that we needed more reviewers. Since the Report was published, we have increased the number of reviewers to 614. That means there are 13 local authorities where there is not a reviewer yet identified, but all those have reviewers within commutable distance.

It is also worth saying that it does not just have to be those on the NCTL approved list. There are pupil premium award winners, such as a school in Portsmouth, which has expertise also to be the reviewer. There are also other school improvement organisations, such as Achievement for All, which can also play that role. For a school that wants to do a review there is an available source of reviewers for them to do it.

We have supplemented that with guidance that puts some clear expectations of what a really good review looks like. Sir John Dunford and the Teaching Schools Alliance produced a piece of

guidance earlier this year that provides a much clearer framework. There was a conversation earlier about the framework and what “really good” looks like in terms of very clearly specified review.

Chair: We heard from Dame Sharon that she has had a lot of very good schools visiting her, but the ones that really needed to were not. Have you thought about how you are going to tackle that? Do you want to tackle that? Or is it laissez faire?

Q38 Mrs Trevelyan: It comes back to that same question. I would ask whether you feel, as you are gathering that evidence base and putting it out there, that there is enough support for the schools that need it most.

Sir Kevan Collins: Finding ways of getting access to schools that are doing a good job on this is a key issue. There is huge variability across the country on the performance of schools with children who face disadvantage. The chart in the Report reveals that in one in seven secondary schools in England, the free school meal children already do as well as all children in England. It is about finding a way of moving that performance around—it is very sticky.

One of the pieces of work we have done is to put every secondary school in England—every primary school in September—into families of 50 schools “most like you”, by the prior attainment of the children, by the level of deprivation, by the IDACI and by the English as an additional language proportion. We say, “In this family, let’s see how you perform against similar schools.” That families of schools database has proved to be hugely popular. Thousands of schools a week come to find schools like them, hopefully as an incentive to go and talk to those schools. We highlight the one most geographically near them and then we cut it by English and maths, and all the rest of it.

Finding ways to get schools to locate and then work, as Juliet was saying, with schools that are like you seems to be a big issue. The variability of performance between schools in England on this one issue is huge. How do we expose schools that aren’t doing so well to schools that are doing a great job, and incentivise them to go and be with those schools?

The other thing I would say on the reporting is on the obligation to report, which I turn to when I look at most schools with the pupil premium. I think that is a powerful tool, which we could beef up a bit more, as a way that essentially gets schools to demonstrate three things: have you properly identified the problem you have got; have you looked at the right evidence to help you; and have you implemented it with fidelity and successfully? That’s what the two headteachers showed us. There is a big implementation issue and a big variability issue, where we get schools to understand and to see the schools like them that are doing a better or worse job.

Q39 Mrs Trevelyan: That is helpful, thank you.

Within the Education Endowment Foundation, which we all feel is a good investment by the Department on a long-term basis, there is a question of whether £137 million over 10 years is enough if we are really trying to drive this forward and to have an aggressive attempt at shrinking that attainment gap. Surely if we pump prime the work that you guys are doing, there could be a

much quicker way in which those schools that need it most could access a much stronger base of evidence from which to make the improvements they need.

Chris Wormald: I should probably let Kevan answer first on whether that is enough money.

Sir Kevan Collins: The good news is that the way we were allocated the money means that we have the opportunity to fundraise and invest to raise more money, so we will spend more like £220 million from the initial £125 million allocated. The more important point is that there are two bits to our job. One is to present the evidence and generate evidence. We seem to have been able to do that well within the resources. We need to do more of that; we need to keep doing that, because we start from a very low base for evidence in education. Yes, we could keep doing more of that.

What turns out to be the most challenging part is mobilising the knowledge that we have and putting it to work. I am not sure that is a money answer. That is a way of supporting the infrastructure of school improvement in England. How do schools actually improve? Who helps them to get better? How do we plug into those networks and structures? We are trying a number of ways of doing that, but I do not think that is a money issue: that is actually the infrastructure to help schools to improve across the board. We are just providing the evidence, particularly around pupil premium, so I do not think it is a money answer; I think it is about the capacity of our system to continue to support itself to get better.

Chris Wormald: We are pleased that the EEF has been seen to be the success that it is and that it has built the evidence base in the way that it has. When we set it up with the initial investment, this was of course a big risk. No one had ever done anything like this before. At the time it was considered to be a huge sum of money to be putting into this type of operation. Clearly, future funding—well, all our budget—is a matter for the spending review.

The other reason, though, why there are no quick fixes here—there was the point that your witnesses began making—is that tackling education disadvantage is a very long-term game. When you are trying out a new approach on how something will impact, it can take a number of years, regardless of how much money you spend, before you can tell if that intervention improved that child's life chances. Even if you did put in more resources, you would still have that big lead time before knowing whether an intervention was long-term successful or not.

Q40 Mrs Trevelyan: Which brings me to my last question. You have not set any targets on shrinking the attainment gap. The phraseology is that you want to see a significant impact on reducing the attainment gap. Realistically, to protect this education policy, which we wholeheartedly support, what is “significant impact”? Is it 10%? Is it 50%? At what point does anybody get that assurance that it is significant? What is it for you guys?

Chris Wormald: As you say, we have not set a numerical target, and the previous coalition Government was wary of setting targets, particularly in this area, because you have a large risk of perverse incentives in gap-closing targets where you have two variables. Sir Kevin was telling me, when we were discussing this hearing, of a school he found that had an extremely low gap because standards were exceptionally low. Gap-closing, as such, does not always tell you anything.

We think it is fair challenge in the National Audit Office Report about how long-term progress will be measured, and the approach we are discussing with our Ministers in response to that is not a set of targets, but much more about looking at how we benchmark ourselves against the highest-performing jurisdictions in the world. We are currently somewhere around the OECD average, in terms of the gap between disadvantaged performance and average performance. Some countries do considerably better than that, both in terms of overall standards and the gap. We want to look at how we benchmark ourselves against those jurisdictions so that we effectively set ourselves the challenge of being as good as the best in the world, as opposed to setting numerical targets.

Q41 Chair: The heat behind our question, really, is if you were sitting in front of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, or your Minister was, how would they convince the Chief Secretary that it was worth spending money on this, with laudable but fuzzy targets, if you like, rather than spending it on other aspects of education funding, given that education is hugely political, both with a big “P” and a small “p”?

Chris Wormald: It would be partly the answer that I have just given. We do monitor the gap, although, as the Report rightly points out, it will be quite a while before we can really tell whether the currently positive changes to the gap are a long-term impact. We would point to the extensive work that Ofsted has done to review the pupil premium and its implementation, and to the increasingly effective evidence base that the Education Endowment Fund has put together about the very exact impact of particular types of intervention and their cost.

Q42 Chair: And you are confident that it would win out, with the political pressure.

Chris Wormald: The governing party committed itself to providing the pupil premium, protected at current rates, as part of its manifesto.

Q43 John Pugh: As the Chair said, there is wholesale agreement on the policy that is being pursued here on the fate of disadvantaged pupils. Funding is one way the Government can address that issue, and we all accept that it is a necessary, but not by itself a sufficient, condition. What is unique about this scheme is that the funding is doled out on a per-capita basis. What is the current pupil premium?

Chris Wormald: It varies between primary and secondary.

Juliet Chua: It is £935 for a secondary-age pupil and £1,320 for a primary-age pupil.

Q44 John Pugh: In the bowels of the Department for Education, when you are deciding what the pupil premium should be, are you basically plucking a figure from thin air? Had you a higher figure in mind originally, and were you talked down by the Treasury, or is there any sort of research basis for the figure you have just come out with?

Chris Wormald: I am not going to claim that there was some massive science for setting the overall quantum for pupil premium. It was negotiated as part of the previous spending review, and that was the sum of money available. The science comes in on how it was spent and the evidence base for the particular—

Q45 John Pugh: The money was simply fixed by a Minister saying—there may have been a discussion with the Treasury—“This is more or less what we think it should be.” It is quite close to plucking a figure out of thin air.

Chris Wormald: No, because the science of what intervention costs is exactly why we set up the EEF. If you look at the EEF—Sir Kevan may want to comment—we know that the sums of money we are allocating via the pupil premium are of sufficient size to be making a significant impact on the gap, but I am not attempting to mislead anyone that there was some giant formula.

Q46 John Pugh: And do you get lobbying from any of the teachers’ bodies that says it is clearly not nearly enough? Has Ofsted said it is not nearly enough and that it should be a higher figure?

Chris Wormald: I am not aware of anyone making that case. If you directly ask headteachers whether they would prefer to receive more money, I am sure they would say yes. As your two witnesses and a number of headteachers have said, the sum of money is less important than the discipline—

Q47 John Pugh: I just want to know why the sum of money was fixed where it is. Clearly the impact will differ across the piece. Obviously, most schools will get something, so there will be political buy-in from most areas, but some schools have relatively few deprived pupils—say, 5% of pupils will attract it. For others it will be 20%, and for one school that was just mentioned it will be 60%. Clearly, the effect of the money going to each of those categories of school will differ somewhat, in terms of the impact on the schools.

Chris Wormald: Yes.

Q48 John Pugh: You probably know, therefore, something about the differential way children perform in schools in which, say, only 5% attract the money, as opposed to schools in which 60% attract the money. Let me just say where I am coming from. I would guess that in schools with a minority of disadvantaged pupils, simply because the general schools resources are okay, the effect will be slightly less than in schools with 60% disadvantaged pupils.

Chris Wormald: I am not sure that that is the case. Kevan will know better than I do, but one of startling things about the figures on disadvantage performance is that if there is a small number of disadvantaged pupils in an otherwise well-off school, the gap is just as great as if there is a large pool of disadvantaged pupils.

Q49 John Pugh: Do they improve at the same rate, though?

Chris Wormald: Kevan is better placed than me to comment on that.

Sir Kevan Collins: When you distribute the schools in the way you describe—by the proportion of children on free school meals in the school—there are a couple of startling facts. First, when you distribute the performance of secondaries, unusually you see a smile curve, which means that schools with low proportions and high proportions of children on free school meals do relatively well compared with the large number of schools in the middle. When we first looked at that, we thought it was a product of the accountability framework. We thought that if you had a very large number of children on free school meals—my whole background is teaching and working in east London—unless you got them moving, you would get caught in the accountability framework and the world would cave in on you. Whereas, if you were in the middle, you were able to get into the clear blue water of being safe in the accountability framework without necessarily needing to attend to the 12% or so free school meals.

As the premium has moved forward, we have seen continued progress. The two groups that you described, with the large numbers and the small numbers, have continued to do well. Because the capacity and the attention to the needs of this group of children has not been there over time, the harder group to shift is that large group of schools in the middle and—and I am almost scared to use this phrase—the coasting schools in that group. The other issue is when you have large numbers of white, low-income children. It turns out that that group is underperforming and is the hardest to shift because you are dealing with a whole set of issues, which we could go into.

Q50 John Pugh: On a point of reassurance, I want to make it clear that the permanent secretary has given that. If you are in a very small minority of disadvantaged pupils in an otherwise quite advantaged school, when you get the pupil premium, you improve in exactly the same way as you would in a school with wholesale disadvantage where most pupils would qualify for pupil premium.

Chris Wormald: That is certainly the intention of the policy. I do not think that I have a dataset that proves that it is happening right now, but that is certainly what we are aiming at. We have made an important change to the accountability system to go over at secondary school level to the Progress 8 measure where every pupil counts for the performance tables, not just those who crossed the D-C borderline. That should incentivise all schools to worry about all pupils and avoid some of the effects that Kevan just described.

Q51 John Pugh: This is not the first—it will not be the last—time that the Department has put schemes out that have endeavoured to address the issue of deprived or disadvantaged children. You will be familiar with the Excellence in Cities programme.

Chris Wormald: I was the deputy director in charge of the Excellence in Cities programme, so I am very familiar with it.

Q52 John Pugh: The cost per head was £120 rather than £833. I think that the qualifying criterion for that programme was that you had to have more than 20% of pupils on free school meals.

Chris Wormald: From memory, that sounds familiar.

Q53 John Pugh: Can you—maybe not now but at a subsequent time—give us some sort of comparison? The same schools that were in the Excellence in Cities programme would have been beneficiaries of the pupil premium. As I recall, in the Excellence in Cities programme, there was an appreciable improvement, particularly in mathematics, over and beyond what currently seems to be the case with the pupil premium. As many of the schools that get pupil premium were in Excellence in Cities, you could do a side-by-side comparison of the pupils' fortunes and the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils to show us whether the pupil premium was a better or a worse scheme in terms of value for money than Excellence in Cities.

Chris Wormald: I would hesitate to say that Excellence in Cities was a very well-run programme.

John Pugh: It was thought to be as good by the National Audit Office.

Chris Wormald: We have looked at the comparison between this and previous schemes, and we have looked at its international equivalents. Pupil premium has one very fundamental difference from, I think, all the schemes we have run previously, including London Challenge, Education Action Zones and a number of interventions. Pupil premium targets disadvantaged pupils wherever they are, whereas the previous approaches—

Chair: We take that as read, but I think John Pugh's question is very pertinent.

Chris Wormald: Although, as you say, a number of those programmes had an impact—we have, of course, seen a particular impact and improvement in London, which was picked up in the Report—none of those area-based initiatives actually closed the overall national gap, which is why you still see the rather large gap mentioned in the National Audit Office Report. We can do that comparison and, indeed, we have looked at those questions before, but it is not the case that those previous programmes, however well run, solved the problem.

John Pugh: Quite, but it would be enormously useful to know how the pupil premium, as opposed to the previous scheme, works in the specific areas where it is applied.

Q54 Chair: These are very different amounts of money, as John Pugh rightly highlights. Can you provide us with that information within the next week?

Chris Wormald: Yes, I think we can.

Q55 Chair: As you were responsible for the previous programme and you are responsible for this, I should hope so. We like it when permanent secretaries say, “Yes, I was responsible for that.” That is fantastic—good start.

Chris Wormald: When I actually was—

Chair: Good, it doesn’t hurt to keep saying it and reminding civil servants that we are spending public money here—taxpayers’ money.

Q56 Deidre Brock: To go back to how you measure the success, or not, of the policy, I noticed that figure 14 has the impacts of the pupil premium reported by school leaders and that it has quite a number of measures that they have highlighted. I know that the Scottish Government use an outcome-based performance measuring system—and for reporting as well. In relation to children it specifically includes indicators relating to, say, the percentage of dental decay presenting in P1, the number of children with a body mass index above a certain level and, as is mentioned in the Report, positive destinations for school leavers. I wondered what the scope is for widening the measurement of the success of the pupil premium?

Chris Wormald: So far, we have unashamedly focused on exam performance; that was how the programme was designed. It is completely correct—it came out very clearly in the evidence from the two headteachers—that there are a lot of wider effects that can be achieved with the same money and all with the intention of improving life chances. We will in future—as we are better able to do following the passage of the legislation at the end of the previous Parliament—be looking increasingly at destination measures in terms of how we judge the whole education system, particularly for our interventions on disadvantaged pupils.

We will, in future, be able to look at whether our interventions resulted in things like higher employment, less chance of being NEET and those sorts of things, which we cannot currently do. We will be looking to expand how we measure but, currently, we have kept the focus very much on educational achievement as opposed to wider social impact.

Q57 Deidre Brock: So apart from positive destinations, what other sorts of thing might you be looking at?

Chris Wormald: No, that is where we are looking to widen—

Q58 Deidre Brock: You don’t think it would be slightly more holistic to look at what is happening with these children?

Sir Kevan Collins: We have received some additional funding and we are doing some work jointly with the Department on looking at what is broadly called character, which takes you into the agenda of self-resilience, regulation, confidence—all these matters. Currently we have 50,000 children involved in 12 different studies that are trying to understand the relationship between experiences. I will give you an example: I recently went to visit Toxteth fire station and the fire

brigade cadets to see what bearing that has not only on attainment, but on building other capacities. We know that these characteristics are, in themselves, important for a life of work and wellbeing. We are trying to look at that interface between attainment as the best indicator for a life of work and wellbeing, and also these other contributing factors—important ones—around character and development.

Q59 Deidre Brock: So that is something that might be linked in the future.

Sir Kevan Collins: We are doing joint work on that now with the Department.

Chris Wormald: A lot of the things in figure 14—again, I thought that the two headteachers described this excellently—are the things that you pursue in order to raise pupil attainment. Clearly, improving pupils' attendance and confidence, and parental engagement, are all the things that headteachers like in order to get their pupil performance up. I wouldn't want to see them as different things, but what we are focused on is whether it raises pupil performance.

Q60 Nigel Mills: I think we all instinctively think that this is a great idea and all the schools in my constituency love it, but how do you assure yourself that you would not achieve very similar results just by getting the actual school funding formula right and having disadvantage reflected there? Are you achieving something better by intervention than by getting funding done properly?

Chris Wormald: As I am sure you are aware, the Government, as well as continuing with the pupil premium, have committed to promoting fair funding going forward for schools. Indeed, they made some announcements last week and will be making further announcements about what they want to do on that. One of the things, however, that comes out of the National Audit Office report is that the very similar sum that has been invested in disadvantage by local authorities as part of the general formula for pupil premium—and it is important to look at the whole of the resources—does not have the accountability changes and the particular focus that we have given to pupil premium. We think that those other things are an important element. All that said, we know that a number of the interventions that make a difference, drawing on EEF evidence, have a cost attached to them, so I do not think we could simply make changes to the accountability system etc. and expect to see results, because we know, as I say, that a number of the interventions that are used have a cost attached, which is the justification for the extra resources.

Q61 Nigel Mills: Okay. I think I follow. Is what you are saying that you cannot realistically get the formula adequately to reflect deprivation?

Chris Wormald: No, I am not saying that. The school funding formula has basically been frozen as it is since 2005. Obviously, there are reasons for that; I can explain them if you want me to. Pupil premium was designed as an addition to the existing unreformed funding formula. The Government have committed themselves to fair funding in the future; they have yet to decide how exactly that will be implemented and rolled out. That will be a spending review question—

Q62 Nigel Mills: But the Government are committed to fair funding and the pupil premium. So you think both will run in parallel?

Chris Wormald: I am simply quoting the Conservative party manifesto. *[Laughter.]* It has committed itself to both those things, as a fact.

Nigel Mills: But that's the question I am asking.

Chris Wormald: People have debated this question before and considered whether, instead of local discretion in the funding formula, you should have a national funding formula. If you had a national funding formula, it might well make sense to have the pupil premium element simply as a part of your whole national funding formula. National funding formulae are incredibly complicated and very, very difficult to implement, so the Government have not implemented them so far. At the moment, the pupil premium is a bolt-on to the existing school funding formula. It would be open to Governments in future to do what you say.

Sir Kevan Collins: The way that the money is distributed matters. If you rolled it into a national funding formula, which I interpreted your question to be about, it changes the response to it. The very fact that this is separated out has, in my view, clearly sharpened the conversation and focus around this group of children.

One thing we have not talked about is that the gap within schools is actually greater than the gap between schools. So, for all schools, there is a question, however well they are performing, about the gap for children with disadvantage. The distribution method here has got everyone thinking about this issue.

We know from the evidence, and even this policy—in the first couple of years—proves it again, that there is no binary relationship between giving schools more money and seeing better outcomes. For me, it is about the relationship between the money, the accountability and the capacity.

Accountability levers have been pretty well pulled in England, over and over again, so the bit that the EEF is working on is this: “How do you build capacity? How do you give schools more knowledge and support around what we know works?” Interestingly, we know from quite a lot of our reports what does not work. How can we support schools to make better choices?

I think that the way the money is allocated makes a difference in the way that people attend to the issue; you could simply roll it in, but I don't think that you would get the same sort of purchase and attention.

Q63 Nigel Mills: An issue I was trying to test was whether you thought that the successes of the pupil premium, to the extent that you can measure them, are down to the fact that it is ring-fenced money that you are probably meant to use for that purpose, or whether it is increased measurement and accountability—the old, “What gets measured, gets done”—or whether you need both. Do you have any feeling on that?

Chris Wormald: My view is that it is a combination of both, and that is certainly what comes out of the Ofsted reports on the subject, which have shown this increased focus at school level on the disadvantaged, and they report that pupil premium money is basically being used better by schools every year.

Q64 Nigel Mills: Do you worry when you see some schools using the money on what is basically general funding issues that you think ought to come from the core budget? Are you looking at anything and thinking, “How is that targeting disadvantaged pupils? That is just general spend”?

Chris Wormald: I think it very much depends on the context. That is why you need an Ofsted to be able to go in and look at where the value is being added on. Let me give you an example. Were a school to decide that what was holding its deprived pupils back was that its maths was not good enough, and it used some of its pupil premium money to improve its maths department, the whole school would benefit, regardless of disadvantage; it would just be that the disadvantaged people would benefit more. That would seem to me on the face of it a perfectly justifiable use of pupil premium money.

Were you simply to be adding the money to the general school budget and spending it regardless of whether you thought it would have the right impact on your disadvantaged, that would be a concern. And that is one of the things that the Ofsted inspection framework looks for: do people have the focus on the actual disadvantaged kids?

Q65 Nigel Mills: But when I look through what schools in my area are spending the money on, a lot will proudly list “extra teaching assistant for key stage x” or something. They might try to put an outcome which says, “Gap closed this year,” but it is pretty hard to see how you link those two up. If you look at the NAO Report, it is in and around figure 6 where it says that, actually, additional teaching assistants are very expensive and have low effectiveness in delivering progress. Are you worried that a lot of schools are saying, “Great. This is extra money. I will use it to fund the core piece of budget that I used to be able to fund that, now with funding changes, I can’t,” and they are not doing what you wanted them to do?

Chris Wormald: Yes, and it comes out of the National Audit Office Report and out of Ofsted that there are schools that do that. We are very encouraged that more schools every year are using EEF resources and we are very encouraged that Ofsted reports that the money is being used better each time. That is not the same as saying that every school has got there yet. I think Kevan will comment further.

I think the position on teaching assistants is quite nuanced. There are excellent examples of excellent teaching assistants doing great jobs in schools all over the country and I think the research evidence—Kevan will correct me—shows they can have a big impact when they are used very well by a school. Used badly, they can be an expensive and not very effective approach—it is all down to how well that intervention is used.

Nigel Mills: So you want to see Ofsted—

Chair: Nigel, when you finish this question, we need to hear from Sir Kevan and then we will go to Kevin—the other Kevin.

Q66 Nigel Mills: We want to hear schools say how they are using the resource they are paying for rather than just say what resource they are paying for—is that what you mean?

Chris Wormald: Yes. Well, more than that—again, it came out from your headteacher witnesses—the thought process that goes into deciding which intervention to use is almost as important as the intervention. The starting point is: do you know your individual pupils and have you analysed what will make the difference for them?

I was very struck by Ofsted's finding in its last report on pupil premium in July 2014 that when you actually looked at what schools were spending money on—the best schools compared with those judged as “requires improvement”—they were in fact spending money on the same types of intervention. The difference was the very good schools were doing it with rigour and consistency and having thought through that that was the right intervention, whereas the weaker schools were using those interventions badly. So the rigour with which you analyse your pupils and then decide how to intervene is almost as important as what the end intervention is.

Chair: Just let Sir Kevan come in.

Sir Kevan Collins: I just think the teaching assistant example is such an interesting one. We spend nearly £4 billion a year on teaching assistants in the system—one in four of the teaching force in primary schools. The issue is that, on the evidence, it is mixed and, actually, they are not making the difference they should make as a group. But when you then examine their deployment in particular ways, you can see a huge impact. We are not asking people—the evidence is suggesting not that we spend more money, but that we spend better the money that we have already got.

This is, I think, as important for the evidence as the allocation of new funding. We have run a whole set of trials on the best use of teaching assistants and we have seen fantastic evidence when they are deployed well. It is actually a management issue; it is not a teaching assistant individual issue. And, interestingly, in the area of the country with the biggest gap, in Yorkshire, we are working intensively with nearly 1,000 schools to better deploy teaching assistants to demonstrate a relatively small investment to lever and better use this existing resource. I think the premium is about that—it is about how you can not only spend more money on this particular group of kids, but better allocate the £30 billion or whatever it is to get more impact for all children.

Q67 Chair: Sir Kevan, I am really interested in that. You are talking about 1,000 schools—

Sir Kevan Collins: Yes.

Q68 Chair: So how are you at the EEF making sure that that is actually happening? What levers are you pulling to do that?

Sir Kevan Collins: We are a tiny organisation. We are not a field force; we are 24 people. Typically, we assemble evidence about teaching assistants from around the world and our own findings from our own studies, and we gather that into a guidance document. In Yorkshire we have employed what we call advocates, who are local partners. They might be teaching school alliances, charities or local authorities, and we ask them to come forward to work with 100 schools each. Those advocates who are now based in Yorkshire—

Q69 Chair: Are you funding them?

Sir Kevan Collins: We are funding them very modestly, actually, but they have come forward with fantastic ideas about how they are now going to work with their 100 schools. They have segmented it, and said “We know that these 20 schools need more, and this part of Halifax needs more compared with those 20 schools”. They have that kind of local knowledge. We are building that local capacity to take the knowledge home or deliver it by hand. We hope that our next port of call will be the north-east of England, where we want to do a significant piece on literacy teaching.

There is a broader conversation about where the capacity sits to help schools improve. Where do you turn, and how do we build in infrastructure to support that work? We are not a big organisation, and we have no intention of being a field force in that way, but we want to support the local infrastructures with evidence. We see many organisations knock on schools’ doors, bringing a seemingly fantastic product that has no evidence behind it whatsoever. How do you know that it has been through any kind of test or verification or proof?

Q70 Chair: So you want to be the kitemark for these interventions? So if it has your imprint, it should be trusted.

Sir Kevan Collins: Yes.

Chris Wormald: Yes. You do two things. You kitemark existing evidence, and then you identify evidence gaps and take action to try to promote the creation of evidence.

Chair: It’s very heartening that you’re having an impact on thousands. I think Kevin wanted to come in briefly some time ago.

Q71 Kevin Foster: In relation to the distribution of funding, yesterday in oral questions I raised the disparities between my own constituency and other areas. Torbay receives something like £1,530 per pupil in deprivation funding, whereas in other areas this amount is more like £5,000, again due to historical reasons. My first question is whether you have looked at the effectiveness of how this money is being used to tackle deprivation, given that there are some quite inexplicable differences between urban areas, to be blunt. My constituency is an urban area, and other urban areas are very different. Secondly, when will we actually do something about that in more detail?

Chris Wormald: I will answer the second question and then ask Kevan to comment on the first, because of course a lot of the evidence base relates to pre-pupil premium research. The

Government set out, both in oral questions and in the announcement last week, that they would continue from the first step towards fairer funding that the coalition Government took at the end of the last Parliament, with the investment of £390 million in the 67 authorities that had the lowest rates of funding.¹ They see that as a first step and, as I said previously, the manifesto commits them to fairer funding going forward. The exact decisions on what fairer funding means and how it will be done will need to wait until the spending review.

Q72 Chair: So the schools funding for the future is linked directly to the spending review?

Chris Wormald: The Government have made some very clear commitments about the quantum of funding that is ring-fenced for schools, both for general school funding and the pupil premium. There are a lot of decisions to be taken about how fairer funding is progressively introduced going forward. Of course it is not a straightforward and simple thing.

Q73 Chair: We know that there are a lot of complications. For those out there who might want to know, such as school heads or governing bodies, perhaps you could clarify when they will know.

Chris Wormald: The Government have not yet decided.

Q74 Chair: Will that decision take place at the same time as the CSR, or will it be consequential to it?

Chris Wormald: The Government have not decided, so I can't give you an answer.

Chair: Kevin, did you want to come in one more time? Then Karin Smyth will come in.

Q75 Kevin Foster: Clearly, for schools in my patch this is quite a major issue. I would also be interested to know whether you feel that you could have closed the attainment gap more quickly if the schools had better accounting of what was done with the pupil premium funding. The deprivation funding then also goes in the pot. Would it be more effective if there had to be some accounting of what is actually done with that extra money for deprivation?

Chris Wormald: Yes. I will ask Sir Kevan to comment on that.

Sir Kevan Collins: The Torbay question is a very interesting one. We are doing some studies in Torbay on breakfasts, on talk in schools and on grammar for writing. These are all happening in Torbay schools, and we are building evidence and learning. What is interesting about this work is that it will be relevant to lots of other coastal towns and lots of other schools across the country. I do

¹ Note from witness: funds had been given to the 69 authorities that had the lowest rate of funding

take your point though, but it is probably out of my agenda here. As someone who served their teaching career and led schools and systems in east London and in Yorkshire, the resources that we received year after year in east London—when you are teaching Bengali kids and you could be teaching the same kids from the same families in Manningham in Bradford—it always struck me as odd that we got so much more in east London. There is a whole issue there. What we really know about the coastal towns is that it looks like some of the hardest intractable issues to shift are in areas where schools are getting some of the lowest funding. What is great about the pupil premium is that for the first time there is a more level field and real resources coming in.

One thing we haven't mentioned is two big changes that have been made about the pupil premium that I think were supported by evidence. The first was to allocate more money to primary schools, which was a sort of shift to bend it and to increase the primary school allocation and give more to primary than secondary. It is very rare that that happens in English education, as we all know. The evidence is very clearly behind that because if you don't reach level 4 in reading by the time you leave primary school, you have a one in 10 chance of getting five A to Cs, so let's spend it down there.

The second was to put more money into early years, which I think is a really positive step forward.

Q76 Mr Bacon: So, just for the avoidance of doubt, the shift from secondary to primary is within the existing envelope?

Sir Kevan Collins: Weighting the money to primary and allocating some money to early years, yes.

Chris Wormald: The rate is higher in primary schools than in secondary.

Sir Kevan Collins: That has been an evidence-informed decision.

Chair: The figures are in the Report. It is £1,320 for deprived primary school pupils, £935 for deprived secondary pupils and £1,900 for looked-after children and previously looked-after children, which is a fairly new innovation.

Q77 Karin Smyth: And on that, we have not really picked up on teaching. The Report does highlight some issues around the need to attract high-quality teachers into schools with a large number of disadvantaged children. Could you say a little about your view of that and perhaps why you think schools are not using that money to attract high-quality teachers?

Chris Wormald: Again, I think the National Audit Office was correct to identify the issue. In our discussions with headteachers, it is frequently what they say, particularly in some of the hardest to recruit in subjects such as maths and physics. The Government have already done a number of things; actually, successive Governments have done a number of things in this area. Teach First has of course been operating for quite some time and has done excellent work in this area. We are also about to start the talented leaders programme which is all about getting the best school leaders to

work in the most challenging schools. Before the election, the Prime Minister committed a future Conservative Government to looking at the idea of a national teaching service which was to be about how we get some of the best teachers to work in the most challenging places. There are a whole series of things that we are doing and will be doing nationally to address this.

The National Audit Office correctly identifies that schools have not been using their pay freedoms to seek to attract teachers with high salaries and that will be something that we are thinking about. It is obviously a local management decision whether to do that or not but I think we were—what was the right phrase, Juliet?—slightly surprised that the figures were so low on the number of schools that were taking up that freedom, so we will be thinking about that.

Q78 Karin Smyth: Do you want to speculate on why that might be?

Chris Wormald: No. I would prefer not to.

Chair: Straying into political territory here.

Chris Wormald: Is there any actual evidence, Kevan?

Sir Kevan Collins: About what? You give me the question, I'll give you the answer.

Chris Wormald: Has EEF looked at why schools don't use their pay freedoms more?

Chair: Beyond the remit of the EEF as well, but I see that one of our headteacher witnesses is still here. We accept written evidence after the event as well. You, or anyone watching who may have an interest, are very welcome to write in and tell us why that is not being used. I can think of a million reasons why it might be challenging but that is not our remit on this Committee.

Karin, did you want to come in on staffing issues?

Karin Smyth: No.

Q79 Mr Bacon: Or, indeed, if you want to write in with written evidence that you have done something and it has had a particular impact. That would be just as interesting.

Mr Wormald, I am a little worried for you because the hearing has gone pretty well for you—

Chris Wormald: So far.

Q80 Mr Bacon: —it has been quite a light outing and, moreover, there is a deep instinct, which most of us seem to share, that the direction of travel feels probably right.

We have had compelling evidence from headteachers, who are compelling leaders using their freedoms wisely. My fear for you is when you go in to bat with the Chief Secretary. You said, "I am glad it has been a success", and I do not think you can say that yet. The Report says—

Chris Wormald: That was about the EEF.

Q81 Mr Bacon: Right. We will come on to the EEF. One of the things I have been most delighted by is listening to Sir Kevan Collins's evidence. It has been a real pleasure. I only wish we had found him years ago.

Chair: He doesn't say that very often, Sir Kevan.

Mr Bacon: Paragraph 22 of the Report says that the gap "remains wide and, at this stage, the significance of the improvements is unclear. More time and further evaluation will be needed to establish whether the Department has achieved its goals." Paragraph 15 says you are all agreed that "many gaps...remain and this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future." We know it is not about money, and you are just beginning to start talking about how you measure progress. Although I am delighted by much of what I have heard, part of me is thinking, "What have you all been doing for the last 50 or 60 years?" I would think that figuring out how you help disadvantaged pupils and what works and what does not was pretty mainstream business for a Ministry of Education: as Sir Kevan said, the relationship between money, accountability and capacity. You are the accounting officer. Should you not have had the answers to these things decades ago?

Chris Wormald: I cannot account for decades ago. The evidence base on this subject is not as good as it should be. That is why we set up the EEF in the first place: to improve that evidence base. When we have looked internationally, which we have done quite carefully, there is no country similar to our own that we have found that has managed to eliminate these gaps, and no countries can claim that they have found the answer to this thing. It is a big challenge in world education. We have had some large gaps and some successes. The Report picks out the enormous progress that has been made in London, but we do not claim to know the silver bullet that solves this problem.

Q82 Mr Bacon: So if I am the Chief Secretary and you are the permanent secretary going in with your Minister to bat, I could say, "You still can't tell me. You have just told me you don't claim to know what causes success. What am I as Chief Secretary supposed to say when I have other people screaming for the money for other equally important purposes?"

Chris Wormald: We would say we have a better evidence base on what works than we have ever had before. We would say that our reports from Ofsted about how this money is being used show that it is being used better and better each year. We would say we have seen some very early signs of the gaps closing, but that in all honesty we cannot use those gaps closing to claim success. This is a long-term game and, as a number of witnesses have said, all the international evidence and evidence from within the UK suggests that a consistent application of evidence around the ways we have discussed in this hearing is what is most likely to lead to long-term success. I think that that argument is understood right across government, and I suspect it is why the Conservative party made the pledge that it did in its manifesto.

Q83 Mr Bacon: Sir Kevan, you mentioned earlier that there was still a big problem between disadvantaged and other pupils in almost every context, and you referred to figure 1. If you look at figure 1, which talks about different ethnic groups, what you have said is pretty much true in every case, with the glaring exception of the Chinese column, where the disadvantaged pupils are on about 69%—this is those achieving five or more GCSEs—and the others, who are not disadvantaged, are on about 75%. There is scarcely any difference at all, and they are all significantly higher than everybody else. Are you doing specific research in this area, on this column? We can all guess why, but the plural of anecdotes is not data. It would be helpful to know what it is that makes the difference.

Sir Kevan Collins: We have actually just published a significant report on the question of English as an additional language and what is happening in those communities. At the headline level, this is obviously completely accurate; it is when you dig deeper. Since the 1980s, when I first started teaching, we have had this idea about the EAL issue—although we have tackled that, as a profession—that on average English additional language kids do as well as English-only speakers. In fact, they do slightly better in English at GCSE. We have tackled that issue as a profession and as a country. But when you go underneath the detail, for certain communities there is a significant issue. Within, say, the column of “black”, underneath that column are all sorts of communities: black Caribbean boys, or boys from certain parts of Africa where the issue is still profound. You get into some quite interesting cultural issues and even linguistic issues.

Take the issue of family engagement and family motivation to learn, which someone mentioned earlier. We know that it is hugely correlated to attainment at school, when families are very positive about education. We go from that to ask the question, “How do you get families involved?” We are testing things that are difficult—even to the point of cash incentives for parents to turn up to parenting classes.

Q84 Mr Bacon: Can I just stop you? I understand a lot of that and I want to come to another question about parental engagement. However, I was actually asking you about the Chinese. I was not asking you about where there is a gap; I was asking you where there isn’t a gap. Are you doing research specifically on this column of the Chinese where, essentially, there is scarcely a gap?

Sir Kevan Collins: We are not doing a specific study on the Chinese community.

Q85 Mr Bacon: Because they are more successful, apparently, than anybody else? Would it not be a good idea to figure out what it is—what is the magic ingredient—that makes for this extra success, and see whether it can be replicated?

Sir Kevan Collins: I am happy to go away and look at that question. I think in the end you will end up with the point that they are Chinese.

Q86 Mr Bacon: Rather than studying only failure, what about studying success? It is very striking.

Chair: And it has been for a long time.

Mr Bacon: Why wouldn't you go away and research that?

Sir Kevan Collins: The issue we face is not that people aren't Chinese, but that if you are white, disadvantaged and poor, you are doing so badly; and yet we have schools in England—one in seven—that are serving those children and doing really well. We need to learn from schools that are serving similar children and replicate that in other schools. I am not sure whether it is as beneficial to find out what is happening in a Chinese family, necessarily, and say to a school serving a community in Great Yarmouth, "What you need to do is be more like this." It might be better to go to a school in a coastal town serving white, disadvantaged kids and say, "Why can't you do what this school is doing, with similar children?"

Q87 Mr Bacon: Yes. Plainly, we have tried for a long time—at least, others have—saying to the Greeks, "If only you were more like the Germans, it would be fine." Plainly, that approach doesn't work; I accept that. But there must be specific facts that you can identify and elucidate in this column that would be of general applicability. I would have thought that it would be interesting to know precisely what they are.

Sir Kevan Collins: There is a concrete example. We looked at the way you teach mathematics in Singapore; it was highly successful. It was being brought to England by the Ark chain of schools. We worked collaboratively with Ark to test that in a randomised control trial with schools across England. We found that there was a modest impact, but it was not the silver bullet or stellar impact you might have expected. So it is about applying what works in one place in the context in which you bring it to bear. We are interested in what works in the Pacific rim and what happens in their education systems. Equally, we are interested in the schools that seem to be doing well by these children. I will take the lead and go away and think about it.

Q88 Mr Bacon: I am sorry to labour the point, but this column about the Chinese is not talking about people in the Asian Pacific rim, but about people in England, isn't it?

Sir Kevan Collins: Yes, it is.

Q89 Mr Bacon: I thought so—just checking. Sir Chris—oh, you're not Sir Chris; though I am sure it will only be a question of time.

Chair: You're doing very well.

Q90 Mr Bacon: Would that it were in my power. I'm sure I would think about it for quite a long time and then come out with my answer. This is really more your bag. We know—and everyone

knows; every teacher you talk to will talk about it—the importance of parental engagement. It is mentioned in paragraph 17. I was interested in bullet point four on page 27: “91% of school leaders perceive parental involvement in pupils’ learning to be a barrier.” There is no surprise there. “However, only 57% of schools had an intervention to address this concern.” Since children spend three quarters of their time not at school, this is one of the single most important things. What are you collectively doing about the fact that nearly everybody says it is a big problem, but less than two thirds—actually, less than three fifths—are doing something about it?

Chris Wormald: We see that replicated when we go around schools and talk to them. Opinion is divided in the education world.

Q91 Mr Bacon: About whether parental engagement matters?

Chris Wormald: No, not about whether it matters, but whether the focus of what schools do should be within the school gates only or whether they should be actively reaching out. A lot of schools, like the two you heard from, are doing the actively reaching out bit. I have also been to very successful schools. There are successful schools that are closing the gap and say, “No, we focus on the bit we control. We focus our resources on what happens in the school rather than outside,” and have done it very successfully. We want to dig into that number. It is an important finding. What successful parental engagement actually looks like at school level is very under-researched.

Q92 Mr Bacon: This Committee took evidence some time ago on an NAO Report on truancy. There were some very simple things that schools did that made a difference. After doing the school register, they immediately phoned up the child’s home. If that did not work, they went round and knocked on the door. That was standard—there was nothing complicated about it—and it had dramatic results. That is not new; it was many years ago. You say that this is under-researched. It is not that under-researched, is it?

Chris Wormald: That part is heavily researched, but that is, as it were, the bare minimum of parental engagement—do you actually get your child to school? If you listened to what the two headteachers were talking about—do you turn up at parents’ evenings?

Mr Bacon: And reading at home—all the other stuff.

Chris Wormald: Do you do all those sorts of thing? Both good practice and the crucial question of the added value that a school can bring are quite under-researched, I think it is fair to say.

Q93 Mr Bacon: Is that an area you are going to look at, Sir Kevan?

Sir Kevan Collins: We have a bundle of studies looking at different ways of promoting and engaging parents’ and children’s learning to see which approach works best. We see schools all over the country trying their best to get parents engaged, but you tend to engage the parents who are already easier to reach, so try novel ways and see which work and which do not.

Q94 Mr Bacon: Presumably, in many cases, the parents of disadvantaged pupils were, at some point in the past, disadvantaged pupils themselves.

Sir Kevan Collins: There is a well-established cycle that we are trying to break.

Q95 Mr Bacon: Does it surprise you that people who have never been taught how to be good parents and how to engage at school find it difficult to engage with a school?

Sir Kevan Collins: No. That is exactly the cycle and the relationship you are trying to break between the parent and their probably unhappy relationship with education themselves. We are testing ways of breaking into that. One example would be texting. There is a simple one we are doing with Harvard University where a parent receives a text saying, "Ask David when he comes home today to tell you something interesting about volcanoes." It tells you what they have already been taught. We all know that when you ask teenage children, "What did you do today?" they all apparently did nothing. You are trying to elicit a conversation. We are doing studies where we engage parents more directly in parenting classes about how to read with their children. A big study was done in Portsmouth with Oxford. We have a bundle of studies that are trying not to prove the point that parental involvement works—that is non-negotiable; we know that—but to work out which ways of engaging parents get them involved.

Chris Wormald: I went to a school that was focused on EBD children.

Q96 Chair: EBD?

Chris Wormald: Emotional and behavioural difficulties—some of the most challenged pupils. One thing they had worked out was that these children's parents never had a positive conversation with the school. The only time they ever heard from the school was when it said, "Your child has now done X and is going to be excluded." So they simply rung the parents every day to say, "Your child had a very good day at school," and they found that it had an impact. There are lots of techniques out there. We are not quite, as Sir Kevan describes, at the point of being able to say, "These are the best 10," or "These are the best 20," but that is what we are researching right now.

Q97 Chair: Okay. I just have a few points and Anne-Marie Trevelyan will then come in before we finish. I will throw this one at you first, because you might need to look it up. We made a recommendation in 2014, with which you agreed, to take action when a school's careers advice is shown to be poor. That feeds in to what Sir Kevan was saying about resilience and character and what you, permanent secretary, were saying about outcomes. What progress have you made towards implementing the measures you set out in your Treasury minute response, which came out in March this year?

Chris Wormald: As well as being responsible for pupil premium, Juliet is also responsible for careers, so I will pass over to her.

Q98 Chair: Juliet, perhaps you could update us here and now. That would be fantastic.

Juliet Chua: This is an area that the Department sees as a priority, to recognise the response from Ofsted and a number of other sources that have identified that the way that schools and colleges are fulfilling their statutory duty to provide good, objective, independent careers advice can be variable, and that there is further to go. Before the election, the Secretary of State launched a new careers and enterprise company, which will be working alongside schools by creating a network of enterprise advisers in every local enterprise partnership area, essentially to support schools to have really strong careers programmes. It will be about ensuring that there is really good quality employer involvement, which we know evidentially is the thing that actually increases employment opportunities. The remit is 12 to 18 and at each stage you have clear interventions that work. We are boosting support and capacity so that schools can fulfil that duty effectively.

Q99 Chair: Could you be clear about who the enterprise advisers are?

Juliet Chua: We have been piloting in six LEP areas. Their profile is people who have a strong experience of business, know employers well but are also effective working with educational institutions. They are sited in the local area so they have good networks and contacts. They will also be supported by the company doing extensive research and development to find out what works, what good looks like, using sources such as the Gatsby report on what really effective practice looks like.

Q100 Chair: Are you able to name the people in the pilot areas? Or can you give us a real-life example?

Juliet Chua: An individual person? I am afraid I have not got that information with me but I am happy to provide a note on it.

Q101 Chair: Fine. Could you write to us? It is interesting because being in business does not necessarily mean being good at careers. It is perhaps difficult to find the mix that you have just described. This is an area we may want to come back to.

Juliet Chua: To be clear, it is a brokerage function. Essentially this is not about someone going in and providing the individual careers advice. It is about somebody supporting a school to have a really strong programme, which may have a range of features in it. What we know about good careers education is that it needs to be a broad programme with a range of activities.

Q102 Chair: I shall have to update you about the progress of the Hackney careers co-op, which is in the process of being established, when we get that far, but I digress. I also wanted to draw something out from a document, "A consultation on school funding reform: rationale and principles" from 2011. I think you were permanent secretary then.

Chris Wormald: No. Before my time.

Chair: Before your time, forgive me. It feels such a long time, doesn't it?

Chris Wormald: We will answer anyway.

Q103 Chair: You may need to write to us then. It refers to the funding formula. At 3.5 there are several bullet points. At the third bullet point, which is about reflecting need accurately, it says, "Some areas are now woefully underfunded compared with how they would be if the system reflected need properly, whereas some areas continue to receive funding to which they should no longer be entitled."

That is pretty strong language for a departmental consultation document. As Deidre Brock pointed out there has not been a funding review in education since 2005. We have got the CSR coming up. You sent out a strongly worded consultation document in 2011. Can you give us a little more before we consider what is going to happen with that funding review, given wording like that?

Chris Wormald: Only what was set out in the governing party's manifesto.

Q104 Chair: You are being very good and loyal. I don't want to use the words "Sir Humphrey" on our first outing.

Chris Wormald: I am afraid it is the only answer I have got because I genuinely do not know.

Q105 Chair: Okay, fair point, because I did raise that one out of the blue. Sir Kevan, when we were talking about the table on page 25, you picked up on the comparison between different ethnic groups. In the past, there was greater granularity in that. Do you, or will you, collect that information in more detail? For example, you mentioned "black". Black African can be broken down into different nations of Africa and there are differences in those groups alone. Are you going to be doing that?

Sir Kevan Collins: We have done that. We have a report that takes you all the way down to, for example, "white other". That turns out to be a group in particular, for example, of Portuguese children who are not doing so well. So we go to that level. The interesting question for us was that there has been a doubling of the proportion of kids who speak English as an additional language in school since 1997. We were then interested in what is called the interaction—what did that mean for the progress and attainment of English-only speaking children when children arrive at a school? What was interesting about the interaction, of course, was that there was no interaction. It made no difference to the progress or outcomes of children who were at a school with large numbers of children with an additional language. In fact, if there was an interaction, there was a slight positive interaction. We were trying to understand that and then we wanted to go deeper into the issues for some of those children so that we could launch, as we have done, a call for research studies that we want to do, looking at the performance of disadvantaged children within that community. The

headline looks quite good for EAL but, when you go underneath the surface, there are certain groups who are not performing well. We now want to do some studies to pull out those issues.

Q106 Chair: And that will all be public information?

Sir Kevan Collins: Oh, everything that we do is public information.

Q107 Chair: That's great. I just want to go back to the permanent secretary—though possibly Sir Kevan you may have an input here as well—briefly before I move on. We talked in an earlier session about being directive, about directing schools to improve versus the freedom that the headteachers clearly relish. If I were Chief Secretary and impatient for change, knowing that it will be 2023 before the first cohort of pupils who have had the pupil premium all through their school career goes through, I might ask you about this, permanent secretary. When you go back before the Chief Secretary, or Minister I suppose it would be in this case, they might ask “Why don't you just make them do it if you know what works?” Are you having any discussions about being more directive where you know what works versus the greater freedom? I am sure that Sir Kevan will want to come in as well.

Chris Wormald: Yes, we talk about how we should evolve the programme all the time. As the NAO report sets out, we have been evolving as we go and we will continue to do so. On the point around mandation—I return to the paragraph of the Ofsted report that I quoted—making people do a particular technique, even if that technique is shown to be successful, is not sufficient. It is about the quality and the rigour with which people do it. The evidence we have seen so far is that the approach that we have set out of a high freedom, high accountability, high evidence model is what prompts people to do that rigorous analysis of their individual pupils, where a more directive programme—like Excellence in Cities, which came up earlier and which said that every school will have learning mentors and every school will have a gifted and talented programme—does not prompt schools to ask themselves those very tough questions that your two heads described. I do not know if Kevan has anything to add.

Q108 Chair: How would you convince the Chief Secretary that this approach is the right one?

Sir Kevan Collins: I think that the current model, which is a voluntary approach, has been interesting for us, with things like the toolkit. We have now had nearly two thirds of heads coming to say that they use the toolkit in your report, which is quite a big take-up of a voluntary approach. The second point is that we do not know what it is you tell people to do—though that never stops people. We do not know what the answer will be for every school. This has to be solved, to a degree, locally; it has to be about the context of your children, the quality of teaching in your school and the issues—as Chris was saying earlier, it might be maths in one school and literacy in another. The real solution comes when schools have the best capacity to do the three things that I mentioned earlier: to understand their children and needs—we heard it from the heads—to identify the best solution and to embed it well. I do not see how you mandate that kind of process; you build capacity to be

able to fulfil that sort of process. That gives us a lasting legacy of continued improvement. That is how I would try to convince someone.

Q109 Mrs Trevelyan: I think that our key concern is that, while this policy and the long-term commitment, which that we want to support the Department in, for this substantial amount of target funding is a good thing, the reality is that for many of these disadvantaged children, the attainment gap is already enormous by the time they start their formal schooling at five. Shrinking that gap is always going to be difficult. We welcome the news that there is this new early-years premium coming through, albeit at only £300 a year. It will be interesting to know whether there is going to be a shift again in the funding out of the block amount of money for pupil premium or whether it is going to be an extra source of funding.

The concern, again, is that I do not think we perhaps feel strongly enough that there is adequate monitoring of this significant impact of the funding so far. How will that be monitored in an age group where the money could easily end up raising the value for a childminder by 50p an hour without really being able to see whether you are investing in what we need, which is ensuring that those children at two and three from the most disadvantaged families are developing language skills and playing with toys that help their numeracy development? Perhaps those families do not have working parents so the children will not be in more formalised childcare environments. We want to support you in pushing that money right down and being effective, but the concern is that you will not be able to get a good handle on whether it is actually working.

Chris Wormald: I will ask Juliet to comment specifically on the early years premium.

Chair: You don't both have to go, if you just want to let Juliet carry on.

Chris Wormald: Successive Governments have invested heavily in early years and have been increasing the entitlements at that level alongside the pupil premium investment.

Juliet Chua: To be clear, the early years premium is separate and distinct from the pupil premium that we have been discussing. Clearly, it goes beyond the remit of the NAO Report. For all the reasons you described, early intervention helps to ensure that the factors that act as barriers to being ready to learn and ready to go at school can be targeted. It will be its first year and we will monitor it closely. We are very aware of ensuring best practice across the system.

Q110 Mrs Trevelyan: I would certainly value some pre-scrutiny on that, so that we can really follow it through and see the best effect of the value for money.

Sir Kevan Collins: Just to add, we conducted a review of the research in early years and produced a parallel toolkit that has been popular in the early years community. Having said that, if the question of dissemination and moving knowledge around is difficult in the schools sector, we think it will be hugely difficult in the dispersed early years provision.

Q111 Chair: Thank you all very much indeed for coming. As you have picked up from the Committee, we all feel that there is quite good stuff going on. Our concern—as evidenced by the NAO Report—is how that is being monitored and being acted upon. When a school is not doing well, how are you ensuring that taxpayers’ money is going towards a good intervention? That brings me to an important point that we have not touched on, but that is worth mentioning: this is taxpayers’ money funnelled through the Department for Education, giving wider benefits to the rest of Government. I suggest that when you go before the Chief Secretary, you could remind him of that fact. I do not know whether any value for money has been done on that but I think that, potentially, there is a wider benefit. We are all aware of the prize to be had if this is achieved.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan mentioned pre-scrutiny, which the Committee is trying to implement. We want to look at a programme ahead of its implementation. We have an early warning system, through our constituencies, of what works and what sometimes does not. We are also very much in touch with some of these things on the ground. Permanent secretary, if you would be willing, we would be happy to pre-scrutinise the pupil premium for early years.

Chris Wormald: I think we are at your disposal. I don’t think I get the chance to refuse.

Chair: I take that as a positive yes. We will find a way of working that into our programme. I should highlight that it will be eight years before we know the full impact of this, so let us hope that it continues for another eight years at least. The best successes prove to be cascaded. Thank you all for coming. We hope that our report will be out in September because we cannot lay it until the House is sitting again.