

STATES OF JERSEY



DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 – 2018 (P.27/2015): EIGHTH AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 14th April 2015
by Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour

STATES GREFFE

PAGE 2 –

After the words “in the attached Appendix” insert the words –

“except that on page 10 –

- (1) in row 2.1, after the second bullet point insert an additional bullet point as follows –
 - ‘Creativity is encouraged within the system so that pupils are ready to innovate as part of a diverse economy’;
- (2) in row 2.4 for the words ‘are school ready’ substitute the words ‘are socially, emotionally and developmentally ready for school’;
- (3) for the first bullet point in row 2.4 substitute the following bullet point –
 - ‘Support children and families from conception, through the critical pre-school years (as outlined in the 1,001 Days Initiative), and beyond’ ”.

DEPUTY L.M.C. DOUBLET OF ST. SAVIOUR

REPORT

Introduction

The purpose of this amendment is to build on and clarify some areas included in the Education section of the Strategic Plan.

In short, to include measures to –

- Give more visibility to the 1,001 Days Initiative and ensure appropriate support for children at the start of their lives.
- Focus on fostering social and emotional ‘life skills’ in young pre-school children instead of a list of inappropriate academic targets.
- Ensure the school curriculum as a whole is not narrow but diverse, vibrant, and creative, to encourage more innovation from young Islanders and help grow Jersey’s economy.

This Strategic Plan as a whole is a good one; it includes aspirational aims to which most States members can hopefully agree. It is clearer than other Plans have been in the past, with fewer main objectives. Health, well-being, education and economic growth, together with a focus on St. Helier, takes in the key areas that matter to the people of Jersey. With the addition of this amendment, it will be even more relevant and fit for purpose.

Various members taking part in the In-Committee debate remarked that they would have liked to see more substance, detail and passion. The amendments as laid out here have arisen from my passion for working to provide the very best services for the children and families of Jersey. I am able to provide substance and detail from my own experiences and understanding of how children learn and develop, and from a range of relevant research.

In this report I will address the 3 points in reverse order, as they relate chronologically to child development. Please refer to my **Appendix 1** for a complete overview of the amendments in context.

Supporting children and families

The 1,001 Days Initiative has been a key part of the Council of Ministers’ plans from even before the election in October. Senators P.F.C. Ozouf and I.J. Gorst both included it in their manifestos – with Senator Gorst placing it right near the top of his list of future challenges, and Senator Ozouf dedicating a substantial paragraph setting out his commitment to placing it on the Strategic Plan and securing funding (see **Appendix 2**). Many other States members, including the Ministers for Health and Social Services and Education, Sport and Culture, have endorsed this initiative. This focus on early years is a refreshing approach, with well-evidenced positive outcomes, and I believe it is key to building a healthy, happy society.

There is a mention of the 1,001 Days Manifesto in the preamble of the Education section of the proposed strategic priorities – it reads as follows –

‘Our focus must extend beyond the education system to encompass the critical early years of our children’s lives. The ‘1001 Critical Days’ initiative recognises that the early years of life are a crucial period and key to brain development. The way in which we care for and treat children during these formative years shapes their lives. We need to review the services provided by different agencies, particularly for children in vulnerable families, identifying any gaps and finding solutions.’

This is a positive statement once again endorsing the initiative. However, when we come to the table of specific priorities, it is absent. Section 2.4 makes a commitment to ‘support children and families during critical pre-school years’, but this does not define the age range and omits the time from conception to birth, which is covered in the 1,001 Days. This amendment simply builds on the point by specifying that the full range of days from conception onwards is a priority, and the 1,001 Days Initiative is there as a solid commitment. Finally, I have added the words ‘and beyond’ as we should, of course, continue to support children and families beyond the early years if needed.

School readiness

This section was the first that I was tempted to amend, as the phrase ‘school ready’ has been a topic of much controversy and debate amongst Early Years Teachers and Practitioners, mainly due to the pressure it puts on very young children to achieve overly-academic, developmentally inappropriate targets. An open letter signed by over 120 senior figures, academics, authors and early years experts, including representatives of all the main teaching unions, was published in the Telegraph in late 2013, speaking out against the increasing use of the term in policy documents: *‘Though early childhood is recognised world-wide as a crucial stage in its own right, Ministers in England persist in viewing it simply as a preparation for school. The term ‘school readiness’ is now dominating policy pronouncements, despite considerable criticism from the sector.’* (Full letter in my **Appendix 3**).

I was therefore surprised to see this term in one of our own policy documents. The



Pre-school children learning through play at the Brighter Futures ‘Dads’ Club’

thought of Jersey children having to conform to a set of formal learning standards by the day they turn 4 horrifies me. Indeed, the very idea that children must have intervention from the system to be able to learn is a flawed one. Children are born ready to learn, it is an innate drive that all humans have – to explore and understand the world around us, to master skills and solve problems. This is called ‘play’, and in the company of attentive parents and highly qualified early years practitioners, children learn through play and master skills at an incredible pace in their first few years of life.

Our focus must not be on teaching to standardised tick-lists and forcing the child to be ready for school, but on making our schools ready for these children in all their wonderful variety and diversity, whatever developmental stage they are at.

If we are to keep this section on school readiness, we must ensure it works in the best interests of every child. The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, Deputy R.G. Bryans of St. Helier, has answered questions from myself and Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour, asking for clarification of his understanding of the term and what it will mean for education policy in Jersey, as follows (see **Appendix 4**) –

“School-ready”, is an early years phrase which talks about ... from my perspective is not as he described it where we are creating school-ready kids for school. What we are talking about is the transition between nursery to primary or from primary to secondary. Those really fearful moments when children have to contemplate moving up in the world. So from our consideration what “school-ready” means is that they have to have strong social skills and that they can cope emotionally with being separated from their parents; that they are relatively independent and have a curiosity about the world.”

– Deputy Bryans speaking at Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Quarterly Public Meeting, Monday 2nd March 2015.

From the answers given by the Minister, it is clear that his understanding has evolved and matches a more developmentally appropriate interpretation of the term, perhaps a different one from that which UK Ministers have taken. This amendment simply makes this interpretation more concrete, so that those using it as a guideline are absolutely clear what was intended – **for young children to have the best start in developing social and emotional ‘skills for life’.**

Encouraging creativity

This last section that I propose to amend (2.1) covers not just the early years, but our entire education system, and has implications for the future development of a diverse and thriving economy. Creativity is in decline in some of Jersey’s schools – a focus on raising standards in the core subjects is seeing the arts squeezed out of the timetable, and teachers using schemes of work where they read lessons from a script rather than planning engaging learning activities. Our current curriculum does not go far enough in encouraging a creative approach to all subjects.

The aim of aligning Jersey’s education system to the Island’s economic needs is a sensible one, and the Minister has my support. However, there are concerns, and the speech given by Deputy S.M. Bree of St. Clement during the In-Committee debate sums them up superbly –

“There is one phrase in the key areas of focus on education that concerns me greatly. In 2.1 of the desired outcome we are told: “That Jersey’s education system is aligned to and supports the Island’s economic needs.” Well, as we all know, the Island’s economy is based mainly on finance and financial services companies. Are we to read from that that our schools are going to become factories churning out accountants and lawyers and nothing else? The point of an education is an all-rounded education, not just concentrating on what do the banks and finance houses need, therefore we produce it for them.

We do not have an arts community in Jersey so does that mean that arts will cease to be taught in schools? We do not have premier division football club in Jersey, so does that mean football stops being taught? I am very concerned about that phrase because if it is true then it means that the States, and particularly the Education Department, and indeed, perhaps, even the Council of Ministers, their priorities are being determined by the finance industry and nobody else and that concerns me greatly.”

Deputy Bryans responded by detailing his focus on ‘soft skills’ that would be a part of this, and assuring the States Assembly that it is not only the finance industry being involved, but digital, creative industries and others. So my addition to this section cements this commitment, and goes further.

If we want to diversify our economy so that we are not over-reliant on one sector, and to provide exciting career prospects that will persuade young adults to stay in Jersey, it all begins at school. We must encourage a variety of skills and qualities in our young people. Creativity is not just about the arts, but can be embedded in the study of all subjects, including maths and science. It is about producing individuals who have a variety of thinking styles and ways of learning. Divergent thinking, for example, is one creative skill we could be encouraging (divergent thinking is a thought process or method used to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions). A study by Land & Jarman (Breakpoint & Beyond, 1998 – as discussed by K. Robinson http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms) measured levels of divergent thinking in a group of 1,500 people across their lifetime. The results showed that genius levels of divergent thinking were innate in most young children, and these levels gradually eroded as they grew up –



Elodie Rondel, age 3½,
Creative Genius

Age of participants	Proportion of group scoring at ‘genius level’ for divergent thinking
3–5	98%
8–10	32%
14–15	10%
Adults	2%

Ideally, we need much more than 2% of our population to possess this trait. I believe one of the most important things our education system should be doing is holding on to and nurturing children’s creativity, and thus producing divergent thinkers who can build the exciting, diverse economy we all want. **Young people who can innovate and solve problems, who have original ideas for projects that will stand out and be successful, and in turn make Jersey a success.** The fact that there were only been 3 successful applications to the Innovation Fund from local people last year shows that we need to do more to encourage creativity and innovation in Jersey schools. Innovation does not simply appear from a vacuum. It comes from individuals who have been encouraged to think creatively through taking an active part in a challenging, vibrant and stimulating education system.

With a new focus on standardised assessments across schools, there will likely be trends away from a diverse arts curriculum and less programs such as ‘Thinking Maths’ – schools may be scared to try new ways of doing things. So much of our education system teaches children that there is only one answer to the question. In life, this is not usually the case. As new technologies are evolving so fast, children in school today are being educated for jobs that don’t even exist yet. We must give them the capacity to tackle the problems and challenges of the future. This section of the amendment is crucial – to send schools a message about what is important to our island, and our children.

Conclusion

As we tackle significant financial challenges over this term of office, it may be easy to lose sight of young Islanders, of the little ones who cannot yet vote or speak out about what their lives are like and what they need. But we are here to speak for those who cannot, to represent them and their needs. Investing in them, their early lives and their education will help us head towards being a more financially stable Island. This Assembly must take a stand and commit to placing children and families at the heart of what we do and to take a long-term view on building a better future.

Financial and manpower implications

This amendment does not add any further financial or manpower requirements, and thus the statement made by the Council of Ministers in the Draft Strategic Plan stands: any additional financial and manpower implications for this amendment will need to be brought forward in specific policy proposals and the Medium Term Financial Plan. All 3 sections of this amendment, if adopted, will have a positive effect on Jersey’s long-term finances by fostering innovation and producing secure, well-rounded citizens who are able to make a significant contribution to society.

APPENDIX 1

Desired Outcome		Key Areas of Focus 2015–18
2.1	Reshape the Island’s curriculum	<p>Implement changes to the school curriculum to ensure that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all Jersey’s children and young people understand the Island’s history, geography and culture; Jersey’s education system is aligned to, and supports, the Island’s economic needs; <p>creativity is encouraged within the system so that pupils are ready to innovate as part of a diverse economy.</p>
2.2	Raise standards and improve outcomes for Jersey’s children and young people	<p>Strengthen arrangements to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitor the progress of individual children, schools, cohorts of children and Jersey as a whole; challenge schools and the system as a whole to raise standards and improve outcomes; support schools to meet or exceed the ambitious targets they set for their pupils; intervene when groups of children are not making expected progress. <p>Review access to higher education</p>
2.3	Implement changes to give schools the freedom and autonomy they need to raise standards over a sustained period	<p>Review current arrangements to improve financial planning, recruitment, governance and accountability, estate management.</p>
2.4	Ensure every child has the best start in life, are school ready are socially, emotionally and developmentally ready for school, engage with learning, make progress and succeed.	<p>Develop a cross-agency approach to deliver joined-up services that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support children and families during critical pre-school years Support children and families from conception, through the critical pre-school years (as outlined in the 1,001 Days Initiative), and beyond. Promote and support the engagement of children and families with learning. Deliver effective early interventions for vulnerable families.

Senator Ozouf's 2014 Manifesto:

The 1001-Day Commitment

The time between conception and the age of two has been shown to be crucial to a person's whole-life chances; educational ability and health are determined by this initial, vital period. Respected third-sector organisations and politicians from across the political spectrum are promoting plans to help. I will ensure that a Jersey action-plan – I call it the 1001 Day Commitment – is included in the next States Strategic Plan, and that it will be funded in the spending plans for 2016 to 2019. This will not only support our youngest of young people, but also give the help and assistance parents need to realise the greatest potential for the next generation. My plan already has the backing of the Chief Minister, other ministers and numerous election candidates. It would be extremely powerful if all Senatorial and Deputy Candidates in this election agree on this and pledge to support.

Senator Gorst's 2014 Manifesto (emphasis added):

Future Challenges

- *Continue to work towards a community where everyone feels valued, welcomed, treated fairly and has a future.*
- **Support the Children's Service with early intervention in struggling families and sign up to the '1001 days' pledge.**
- *Deliver new homes for Jersey families.*
- *Roll out further discrimination legislation.*
- *Deliver and action a disability strategy.*
- *Update the Mental Health Law and radically improve mental health support.*
- *Provide enhanced respite care facilities for adults as well as children.*
- *Deliver the new hospital.*
- *Deliver the e-government programme.*
- *Work to give more influence to St. Helier.*
- *Reform the electoral system and continue to support the Parish system with Connétables in the States.*

**Open Letter to the Telegraph
12th September 2013**

We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned about the impact of the government's early years policies on the health and wellbeing of our youngest children. The early years of life are when children establish the values and mindsets that underpin their sense of self, their attitude to later learning, and their communicative skills and natural creativity.

Though early childhood is recognised world-wide as a crucial stage in its own right, Ministers in England persist in viewing it simply as a preparation for school. The term 'school readiness' is now dominating policy pronouncements, despite considerable criticism from the sector.

The role of play is being down-valued in England's nurseries. For many children today, nursery education provides their only opportunity for the active, creative and outdoor play which is recognised by psychologists as vital for physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. However, two key qualifications currently being drawn up for nursery teachers and child carers no longer require training in how children learn through play. Indeed current policy suggestions would mean that the tests and targets which dominate primary education will soon be foisted upon 4 year olds.

Research does not support an early start to testing and quasi-formal teaching, but provides considerable evidence to challenge it. Very few countries have a school starting age as young as 4, as we do in England. Children who enter school at 6 or 7 – after several years of high quality nursery education – consistently achieve better educational results as well as higher levels of wellbeing. The success of Scandinavian systems suggests that many intractable problems in English education – such as the widening gap in achievement between rich and poor, problems with boys' literacy, and the 'summerborns' issue – could be addressed by fundamentally re-thinking our early years policies.

Instead of pursuing an enlightened approach informed by global best practice, successive Ministers have prescribed an ever-earlier start to formal learning. This can only cause profound damage to the self-image and learning dispositions of a generation of children. We as a sector are now uniting to demand a stop to such inappropriate intervention and that early years policy-making be put in the hands of those who truly understand the developmental needs and potential of young children.

The Save Childhood Movement (SCM) Early Years Education Advisory Group

LETTER SIGNATORIES (128)

Wendy Ellyatt, Chief Executive, Save Childhood Movement

Professor Sir Al Aynsley-Green, former first Children's Commissioner for England, Professor Emeritus of Child Health University College London

Prof. Lord Richard Layard, Director, Well-Being Programme, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics

Professor Guy Claxton, Co-Director of the Centre for Real-World Learning and Professor of the Learning Sciences, at the University of Winchester

John Freeman, C.B.E., Past Joint President, Association of Directors of Children's Services
Dr. David Whitebread, Senior Lecturer in Developmental Psychology and Early Education, University of Cambridge
Barry Sheerman, MP, Chair of The Skills Commission; Chair, Labour Party Commission on School to Work; Co-Chair, All-Party Group on Bullying; Co-Chair, Westminster Children's Commission
Penelope Leach, Psychologist and Director, Mindful Policy Group
Susie Orbach, Psychoanalyst, writer and social critic
Christine Blower, General Secretary, National Union of Teachers (NUT)
Dr. Mary Bousted: General Secretary, Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Chris Keates, General Secretary, NASUWT
Deborah Lawson, General Secretary, VOICE, The Union for Education Professionals
Ben Thomas, National Officer, UNISON Children's Services
Brian Strutton, General Secretary, GMB Union
Neal Lawson, Chair of Compass
Melian Mansfield, Chair, Early Childhood Forum (ECF)
Sue Palmer, independent writer, consultant and presenter
Purnima Tanuku, O.B.E., Chief Executive, National Day Nurseries Association
Neil Leitch, Chief Executive, Pre-School Learning Alliance
Liz Bayram, Chief Executive, PACEY
Wendy Scott – President, TACTYC
Margaret Morrissey, Founder, Parents Outloud
Emeritus Professor Philip Gammage PhD, D Phil, FRSA, former Chair TACTYC; former President BAECE; Foundation de Lissa Chair in EC, South Australia, former Dean University of Nottingham)
Professor Emerita Janet Moyles, Early Years Consultant
Dr. Richard House – Senior Lecturer in Education (Early Childhood), University of Winchester and Chair, Early Childhood Action (ECA)
Annette Brooke, MP, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Children, Young People and Families 2004 – 2010
Melanie Gill, Founder of the Mindful Policy Group
Patrick Holford, CEO, Food for the Brain Foundation
Professor Kevin J. Brehony, Froebel Professor of Early Childhood Studies, Froebel College, Roehampton University
Ben Hasan, Chair of the National Campaign for Real Nursery Education (NCRNE)
Adrian Voce – Independent writer and consultant, Founder of Play England
Catherine Prisk, Director, Play England
Marguerite Hunter Blair, Chief Executive, Play Scotland
Mike Greenaway, Director, Play Wales
Professor Michael Patte, Co-editor, The International Journal of Play
David Lorimer, Chief Executive, Character Scotland
Tanith Carey, parenting journalist, author of Where Has My Little Girl Gone? How to Protect Your Daughter from Growing Up Too Soon
Margaret Edgington, Independent Early Years Education Consultant
Janni Nicol – Early Childhood Representative for Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship UK
Kim Simpson, Nursery Head Teacher and Founding Director, Save Childhood Movement
Penny Webb – Childminder, Founder of the One Voice Site
June O'Sullivan, M.B.E., CEO, London Early Years Foundation

Titus Alexander – Convenor, Democracy Matters
Sally Goddard Blythe MSc, Director, The Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology (INPP Ltd.)
Professor Barry Carpenter, O.B.E., PhD, Professor, Early Childhood Intervention, University of Worcester
Professor Colin Richards, H.M.I. (retired) Emeritus Professor University of Cumbria
Dr. Barbara Taylor – General Secretary, National Association for Small Schools
Grethe Hooper-Hansen – Independent Consultant
Anne Nelson, early years specialist, former chief executive of the British Association for Early Childhood Education (BAECE)
Professor J. David Ingleby, Centre for Social Science and Global Health, University of Amsterdam
Professor Rita Jordan, BSc., MSc., M.A., PhD., C. Psychol., A.F.B.Ps.S., O.B.E., Emeritus Professor in Autism Studies, University of Birmingham
Dr. Ana Marjanovic-Shane, Professor, Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia, USA
Richard Masters, Manager, Hermes Trust
Tobin Hart, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, University of West Georgia, USA
Jane Joyce
Dr. Jennifer Patterson, Senior Lecturer in Education, Principle Investigator Natural Learning and Environments, University of Greenwich
Pat Petrie, Professor Emeritus, Institute of Education, University of London
Dr. Bronwen Rees, former Director, Centre for Transformational Management Practice, Anglia Ruskin University
Professor Andrew Samuels
Pippa Smith, Co-Chairman, Safermedia
Miranda Suit, Co-Chairman, Safermedia
Brian Thorne, Emeritus Professor, University of East Anglia (Norwich)
Annie Davy – Early Years Adviser, Author and Consultant
Jo White – Head of Portman Early Childhood Centre
Dr. Carolyn Morris – Senior Lecturer Early childhood Studies, Middlesex University
Laura Henry – Managing Director, Childcare Consultancy, UK representative for the World Forum in Early Care and Education
Edwina Mitchell – Independent Researcher
Elizabeth Jarman – Managing Director, The Elizabeth Jarman® Group
Maggie Fisher – representative for Community Practitioners’ and Health Visitors’ Association (CPHVA)
Juno Hollyhock – Executive Director, Learning through Landscapes
Barbara Isaacs, Director of National Strategies, Montessori St. Nicholas Charity
Pauline Trudell – Vice-President, The National Campaign for Real Nursery Education
Dr. Carole Ulanowsky – Social Researcher
Dr. Helen Prochazka, Director, the Montessori Partnership
Lydia Keyte – Chair, What about the Children
Leigh-Anne Stradeski – CEO, Eureka National Children’s Museum
Marie Peacock – EYPS, Mothers At Home Matter
Helen Ruffles – Head teacher/Head of Centre, Netherton Park Nursery School and Children's Centre
Barbara Patterson, author of “Beyond the Rainbow Bridge – nurturing our children from birth to seven years”
Fiona Carnie, Vice-President, European Forum for Freedom in Education

Gabriel Millar, Teacher and Therapist
Professor Fraser Brown PhD., Playwork Team, Faculty of Health & Social Sciences, Leeds Metropolitan University
Adrian Ramsay, Green Party Home Affairs spokesperson
Rod Parker-Rees, Co-ordinator of Early Childhood Studies, Plymouth University
Mary Macomber Leue, M.A., Founder and Director-emeritus of The Albany Free School, NY
Vincent Nolan, ex-Trustee, Synectics Education Initiative
Sue Cox, Senior Lecturer, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia
Julie Fisher, Independent Early Years Adviser & Visiting Professor Early Childhood Education at Oxford Brooke's University
Rosa Collins, Early Years Consultant
Marie-Louise Charlton, Early Years Education Consultant
Aonghus Gordon, Founder and Executive Chair, Ruskin Mill Trust
Catriona Nason, Managing Director, Daycare Doctor
Elizabeth Steinthal, Head Teacher, Educare Small School
Shirley Brooks, Senior Lecturer in Early Years Care & Education, University of Winchester
Professor Del Loewenthal, University of Roehampton
Dr. Simon Boxley, Undergraduate Programme Leader, Dept. Education Studies, University of Winchester
Derek Bunyard, Senior Lecturer in Education Studies & Liberal Arts, University of Winchester
Jess Edwards, Charter for Primary Education coordinator and Lambeth National Union of Teachers
Dr. Bridget Egan, Senior Lecturer, Education, Health and Social Care, University of Winchester
Dr. Richard Eke, School of Education, University of the West of England
Sue Gerhardt, author of Why Love Matters
Dr. Gillian Proctor, Clinical Psychologist and author
Dr. Sebastian Suggate, lecturer in education, University of Regensburg
Kathryn Solly, Early Years Specialist, Former maintained nursery school head, a member of ECF, NET, NCRNE, Early Education, and NAHT
Barbara Bedingfield, Founding Director, Suncoast School, Florida
Nancy Blanning, Early Childhood Developmental specialist, Denver, Col., USA
Richard Brinton, Educator, former Principal, Hawkwood College, Stroud
Katharine Brown, Early Childhood Educator, Middleton, Mass., USA
Dr. Julia Cayne, Psychotherapist and Visiting Lecturer, Centre for Therapeutic Education, University of Roehampton
Peggy Day-Hakker B.A., M.Ed., Lead Writer, Australian Steiner Curriculum Preschool Director, Sydney, Australia
Betty Jane Enno, WECAN (Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America) Regional Representative
Eric Gidseg, Ph.D., Department of Elementary Education, State University of New York
Lavinia Gomez, M.A. (Cantab), M.A. (Essex), writer and researcher
Sherry Jennings, early childhood educator
Yvonne La Montagne, R.N., early childhood educator
Dr. Jane Payler, Senior Lecturer in Early Years Education, University of Winchester
Dawn McCoy, former Waldorf kindergarten assistant, Potomac Crescent School, Arlington, Virg., USA

Pearse B. O'Shiel, M.A. in Ed., Ireland
Heidi Anne Porter, Waldorf Kindergarten Teacher
Sylvie Hétu, Early years educator, international Trainer for IAIM and MISA
Rosemeire Laviano, Maiana Educacional – Brazil
Denise Sachs, Davina Muse Simplicity Parenting
David Adams, Ph.D., Sierra College, Grass Valley, Calif, USA
Vicki Kingsbury, Early Childhood Teacher, Pewaukee, WI
Manali Mehta, Director, Shrishti Pre-Kindergarten, Mumbai. India
Margaret Shams, M.Sc. (Steiner Educ.), Italy

Taken from transcript of Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Quarterly Public Meeting with the Education Minister, Monday 2nd March 2015

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

In your strategic priorities (I know we have touched on this briefly but I just wanted to confirm it) can you just tell me, do you stand by this statement that you want to ensure every child is school ready and, if so, what do you mean by that?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think we had a private discussion about this where I said it was about semantics, and I know the Director and I slightly disagree on this point. I think it is about 2 things: one is providing that the child moves in the correct way from primary to secondary or from nursery even to primary. That is about being able to support the child emotionally. It has already been discussed and the Director has just outlined that we have got to make sure that the child has those social abilities when they move from one place to another, whether it is from nursery to primary or primary to secondary, depending upon what level they are at that point in time. Equally, it works the reverse way. The schools need to be ready for those children, and I think there has been too much observance in the past of almost like these stepped marks, and it has not been this continuous thing. So school ready, and I take on board what you said previously, I think is making sure that the emotional wellbeing of the child is considered at each point so that they have got support and they have got continuity, which goes back to the very point we were just making about making sure there are nurseries in schools where applicable, if possible. Then the heads of those primary schools can see the transitions that are being made and they could advise it. Equally, the sort of information that is being transferred is really important so that the secondary schools in particular will look at that stuff that has been compiled from nursery all the way through, if possible, and have much better information to work with.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

When you say “school ready” you do not just mean ready for nursery and reception, you mean ready for secondary school as well?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay. So, just to sum up and confirm, when you say school ready you do not mean a kind of academic list of boxes that a child should tick?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is about being emotionally ready and about the child’s wellbeing, social and emotional?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Again, going back to what you just said about nurseries, if you take a child from a nursery to a primary that ability to be separated from the parent is really of core concern. Whenever we talk about this it is going to be about the wellbeing of the child.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. That answers my question.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Can I just add: we need to get to the point where kids cannot wait to get to the big school; they are really excited about it, not worried about it. That is the objective, and most are; most cannot wait to move on.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

They will be excited when the schools are ready and appropriate for the children rather than the other way round.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture

Absolutely.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I will stop talking now and, Deputy Mézec, did you want to ...?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I was going to say I remember how excited I was when I first ...

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

If we are not careful we will make this an issue and it is a really exciting point in children's lives.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Most children are excited.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I was happy to move because I hated my primary school.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is keeping that excitement. It is not squashing that excitement out of them as they go through the system. It is keeping that.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Talking to the primary head, who you would know, from Grouville, she said to me there is not a child that comes back from the 2 days where they are in that discovery mode going into the next school and says they are not excited about it. Nobody ever complains about it.