

4.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the internal investigation into the starting-pistol shooting incident at a secondary school:

Could the Minister clarify what policies and procedures, if any, were followed in conducting the internal investigation into the starting pistol shooting incident at the secondary school and were students who witnessed the incident interviewed?

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan of St. John (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

The Deputy has asked similar questions on the same subject matter over the last 2 or 3 States Assemblies so I will not go back over all the ground, so I will say this. Thankfully, the young person involved was not seriously injured. Safeguarding is our prime responsibility and we take it very seriously indeed. I advise that 2 internal investigations into the starting pistol incident are in progress and they have taken place. They were initiated once the police inquiry and the court case were completed. The first of those 2 inquiries has now been completed in line with the States of Jersey and Education disciplinary procedures. The second investigation relates to the school's management and reaction to the department's physical education and accident reporting procedures. This one is not yet concluded. During the internal investigations, students were not interviewed because this had already been done as part of the initial investigation by the police and these statements were available to the department so in that case, it was not necessary to interview the young people a second time.

4.3.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Thank you. Supplementary, Sir. I do not ask these questions lightly but having been contacted by the parent, my concern is with the child and I would like the Minister to at least let us know - because I believe it was not mentioned in court - that in the pupils' and the parents' statements, words were attributed to the teacher to the effect of: "Watch this. I am going to shoot pupil X in the face." If that is true, is the Minister fully confident that his internal inquiry has done the necessary? With the teacher returning to school - who I do not know, I have got nothing against him - but is that sending out the right message about how safe our children are?

[10:00]

The Deputy of St. John:

There were about 3 questions in there and I will try and remember them all as I think about answering the last one. In terms of are our children safe, we have taken action. We have removed all starting pistols from all schools in Jersey. I cannot do more than that. About the students' statements, the students who witnessed the incident made statements the day after it occurred. It is not usual practice for the department to repeat such interviews with minors. This puts minors under stress and it is not right especially after some time has elapsed. These students have now left the school and are carrying on with their education, training or work elsewhere so it is wrong to go back over old ground. I repeat, the E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture) team had access to the statements. Am I satisfied that my department, the police, everybody concerned is carrying out the necessary investigations? Yes, I absolutely am.

4.3.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I question the method of prevention and I am intrigued. Would the Minister kindly tell us how they are going to be starting running races and so forth in future? With a whistle?

The Deputy of St. John:

I am going to ignore the last part of that question completely and I hope the Assembly forgives me and the public outside forgives me for ignoring that. As regards the procedures concerned, I will make one further point. The court case is a matter of public record at which the incident was proven and sentenced accordingly by the Magistrates Court. This is a matter of public record. The internal disciplinary process and the procedure is confidential and not a matter of public

record in line with States of Jersey policy regarding disciplinary matters for its staff and that disciplinary process has now been completed. Original evidence included a statement of retraction by the main student concerned and I think I would like to leave it there.

4.3.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can the Minister tell us if the main witness was the child who was shot in the face and, in concluding that question, would the Minister reconsider what he said about moving on because this child has left the school. That is not the issue. The issue is could this happen again to any other child. Would he not agree?

The Deputy of St. John:

All starting pistols have been removed from schools. I do not know who the main statement was because I have not read it. This is an operational matter. Ministers and Members of this Assembly are here to formulate policy. This is operational and I am very confident in the ability of my officers to carry out any necessary investigations and to take the necessary actions as required when they have the results.