

**QUESTION TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE
COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY, 20th MAY 2003, BY DEPUTY G P SOUTHERN
OF ST. HELIER**

Question

The former Education Committee increased the 16+ pupil teacher ratio in the 2003 budget. In responding to my question on 5th November 2002, the previous President was unable to give details of budgetary and educational consequences of the resultant service cut. Will the president inform members -

- (a) what sums were cut from the budgets of Hautlieu School, Highlands College, the fee-paying colleges and grants to private schools as a result of the increase in pupil teacher ratios?
- (b) what effect these cuts have had on the average and maximum class sizes, and the range of courses offered in each of the institutions in 2003? and,
- (c) what measures the Committee proposes in order to protect class sizes and standards in the States sector in its 2004 budget proposals in the light that the fee-paying colleges have announced an increase in fees "to protect class sizes and standards"?

Answer

- (a) The question refers to a very complex issue as school budgets are influenced by a number of factors including the pupil teacher ratio, current pay scales, demographic movements and the number of pupils in each year group. As a result, although the total amount taken as a 'saving' was £260,000, the budgets for all post 16 providers have increased between 2002 and 2003 and it will therefore be necessary to undertake a detailed analysis of school budgets in order to disaggregate the impact of changes to the post 16 pupil teacher ratio from other factors.

This analysis will require significant input of officers within the Department for Education, Sport and Culture, head teachers and staff in schools with post 16 provision. However, if the Deputy could indicate the purpose and benefits of this investment in time and effort and is insistent on obtaining the analysis I will instruct that the work is undertaken.

- (b) Any school budget which is subject to change in January cannot remove or reduce classes already functioning from the previous September. Therefore any budget changes could only effect the curriculum for the next year and beyond.

Discussions with head teachers confirm that any impact on class sizes and/or the range of courses offered in each institution cannot be accurately assessed until the Autumn 2003 term when pupil numbers are known along with which subject options they will each wish to follow. These choices are influenced by, among other factors, the GCSE results which are not due until August.

Therefore, at this stage it is impossible to assess the impact of the changed pupil teacher ratio on both class sizes and subject options. That is not to suggest that there will be no effect and schools will have to meet the challenge of making the most appropriate provision with the available resources.

- (c) The outcome of the Fundamental Spending Review process to determine Committees' 2004 revenue allocations recommended that the Education, Sport and Culture Committee should receive an additional amount of £702,000 in 2004 to fund demographic growth. The Committee will be considering options for the allocation of its 2004 Cash Limit at its meeting tomorrow, 21st May 2003, and while I cannot pre-empt my Committee's decision, I anticipate that, in view of the additional funds available to the Committee in 2004, it will not be necessary to make any further changes to the post 16 pupil teacher ratio at this stage.

However, I should stress that such planning is dependent on the States approving Committees' budget allocations in line with the outcomes of the Fundamental Spending Review when the 2004 Budget is finally approved. Should this budget proposal not be approved then there could be serious implications for the maintenance of existing pupil teacher ratios throughout the Service.