

2.10 Connétable G.F. Butcher of St. John of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding financial benefits to private sector schools in addition to the subsidy for fees:

Would the Minister advise whether private sector schools have received any other financial benefits in addition to the subsidies for fees over the last 10 years such as funding for buildings, property maintenance and so on?

The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

Over the past 10 years, in addition to the subsidy for fees, grants totalling £6.5 million have been made available to the private faith schools for capital development. In addition, a loan facility amounting to £500,000 has been extended by the States to one of these schools for the development of a new primary school library. The private schools also benefited from being included in the department's first I.C.T. (Information and Communications Technologies) strategy funded by the Jersey Information Society Commission. The estimated value of this to the private schools was approximately £1 million. All private schools benefit at nil cost from the professional development and training initiatives provided to teachers in state schools. They are included in all professional development training offered by the schools and colleges team. This includes areas such as curriculum, learning, leadership and child protection. Finally, the schools have access to the Professional Partner Programme operated by the department and to funded external inspectors if required.

2.10.1 The Connétable of St. John:

Can I just ask if these grants are repayable? Are they loans or are they grants, and if they are loans what interest is paid on them?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

A grant is a grant and a loan is a loan.

2.10.2 Senator J.L. Perchard:

Does the Minister agree that despite receiving financial support for some capital projects and services, the fee-paying schools in fact provide excellent value for money for his department, the taxpayer and the States of Jersey?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

This is a process, as I said before, that we are going through and it is my aim that we determine what is the appropriate support to maintain these schools in the future, which includes any capital programme.

2.10.3 Senator J.L. Perchard:

Just a supplementary: perhaps the Minister may consider answering my question. Does the Minister consider that the fee-paying schools, despite being in receipt of some monies for capital projects and services, are in fact excellent value for money for his department, for States of Jersey and the taxpayer?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I value the contribution that the schools make. However I am still carrying out a period of review, which was supported by the Public Accounts Committee in their recent review of States spending, which Senator Perchard is a member of; and their recommendation 5.17 clearly states: "The P.A.C. (Public Accounts Committee) requests the Education, Sports and Culture Department undertake a meaningful

examination of optimal fees.” That is what I am doing, and I would suggest that the Senator allows me sufficient time to get on with the job.

2.10.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

In the review which he is undertaking, has the Minister given any thought to the issue of tying the grants (where a grant is a grant) to performance? A difficult issue given his well-known aversion to publicising results.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I do not necessarily think it is appropriate to tie capital expenditure to performance.

2.10.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

What will the Minister say regarding value for money with the fee-paying schools to those people who cannot afford to send their children to the fee-paying schools and are, in fact, subsidising them through their tax?

[10:45]

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I support parental choice. I also recognise that it is my legal responsibility to provide education for all children, and I know with some confidence that we have an excellent education system that parents can access if they choose. That includes our state schools.

2.10.6 The Connétable of St. John:

Is the Minister aware of any applications made by private sector schools for fiscal stimulus money?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, there was an application made by one of the faith schools and that is being currently considered and progressed.