

2.12 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the comparison of G.C.S.E. grades between all non fee-paying and fee-paying secondary schools in Jersey:

May I ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture if he will provide, as a group, the most recent G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) grades for all non-fee paying secondary schools in Jersey and state how they compare to the fee paying secondary schools?

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

The department's policy is not to publish the results of individual schools or by sector, as we do not wish to create the opportunity for the development of league tables, which are proved to be divisive and crude. Raw results take no account of a school's admission criteria, the catchment area which feeds the school, or the work being done with pupils in that school. Neither is it in the best interest of individual schools to publish results, either by school or by sector. Jersey has a highly selective education system. It would be wrong to compare the performance of the non fee-paying sector against the fee-paying sector as this would give a distorted view.

2.12.1 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I used to share the same opinion as the Minister, but of late I have changed my tack and I ask the Minister whether or not his recent proposals, which focus on the costs of running schools and delivery services, are not themselves divisive and crude.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Not at all. As I said before on this particular subject, if parents wish to view and discuss the academic achievements of a particular school then they are more than able to meet with the headmaster and they will gain that information.

2.12.2 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Sorry, that really made me stand, Sir. May I ask through you, Sir, if I might be given on this one occasion today - and every other time - the Minister has consistently refused to give Members of this Assembly answers to those questions and now he is saying any member of the public can go up and get those answers from the headmaster? Is that what he has just said?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

For parents who are choosing, particularly an appropriate education or school for their child, it is absolutely right that the parent is able to visit the particular school and discuss with the headmaster the academic achievements within that school. In that way, the headmaster is able to put into context and deal with any questions that might arise from the parent concerned.

2.12.3 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

I believe I heard correctly at the Parents for Choice meeting last week when the question arose of exam league tables, and somebody mentioned at that meeting - and I believe I heard correctly - that one of the States' secondary schools, of the young people taking English and Maths, only 28 per cent gained a grade A to C in those subjects. I was quite horrified when I heard that figure of 28 per cent, which is well below the U.K. average of 51 per cent. Even taking into consideration catchments,

language difficulties, *et cetera*, is the Minister prepared to tell the Assembly whether that figure I heard last week is correct?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

This is part of the problem, when people tend to seek to use information to promote a particular argument. The figure that has been quoted of 28 per cent is untrue and incorrect.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You have answered the question. It is incorrect.

2.12.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour:

Would the Minister not acknowledge that there is a slight inconsistency in that when O-level results are announced his Department immediately publishes a press release showing how Jersey 6th forms are performing in relation to certain types of 6th forms in the U.K.? Would he not accept, if there was honesty in the process, transparency and the concept, for example, of value added was fully explained and fully put into the public domain we would not be playing this game of shadows with everybody at the moment, which is basically leading to immense frustration.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The experience in the U.K. has shown that league tables do not work and I do not propose to advise this Island or the Education Department to follow that particular route. With regard to 6th form and the comparisons, as I said before, we have a highly selective education system. When it comes to A-level studies, all the schools are selective, including Hautlieu, which selects on academic ability and achievement. As such, it is, I believe, acceptable to consider those results.

2.12.5 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Deputy Le Hérissier has rather stolen my thunder. Nevertheless, even with a value added approach, within a small geographic jurisdiction, does the Minister agree that league tables could only have a negative impact? Because the issue will become a political football with point-scoring made by certain people?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think I have already made the point, but the Deputy raises another, which I feel I should just quickly address; that is about value added. That is something that is challenging all educational authorities, whether over here or in the U.K. It is something that I have asked both my department and the teachers to consider, so that we can properly demonstrate the achievements of those that perhaps are less academically minded than others. Thank you.

2.12.6 Senator A. Breckon:

Can I just declare a non-pecuniary interest? I am an invited governor of Grainville school. Would the Minister like to comment that when some grades are published, some schools have an inclusive policy that includes students that have special needs, and also do not have English as a first language?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Absolutely and it is a policy that I fully, fully endorse. I think it is sad that in certain cases we do not have the inclusion policies that we should. It is one thing that I aim to promote and continue to promote. Thank you.

2.12.7 Senator J.L. Perchard:

The Minister said that he has asked his officers to look at a way of assessing value added. I think probably Members would agree that that would be a good compromise, because the Minister will no doubt want to hold the schools to a level of performance and to ensure that the schools are improving. Will the Minister agree to impose a value added test on all schools? Will the Minister then release that information so that parents can make an informed judgment when their children have to migrate from fee-paying schools?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I do not understand the comment that pupils will have to migrate from fee-paying schools, as though our State schools are somewhat inferior. I absolutely refute that suggestion. We have excellent teachers within our education system, both across the fee-paying and non fee-paying. **[Approbation]** We see our young people achieving good standards. With regard to value added, I would like to add that it is not just about money. It is something that we need to avoid. A few Members seem to focus simply on economics.

[11:00]

Well, I am afraid there is more to it than that. It is an educational policy that I want to develop, and that is what we will be discussing in the New Year when the Green Paper comes out on the future of education. Thank you.

2.12.8 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

That was a very old trick played then by the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to avoid the answer, which is pertinent, which I will try to put it a little bit more simply to him in order that he may understand it. It is exactly what Senator Perchard just put to him. When he evaluates the performance of these private schools, which he says he has a duty to do because they are receiving States subsidies, will he and his department discount in any evaluation the results that those schools are achieving?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We have to take into account the performance of each and every school. It is a piece of work, in co-operation with the governing bodies, where we are proposing to invite independent educational advisers into each schools, so we can verify independently how those schools are performing and what opportunities exist for improvement. Because that is ultimately what we all strive to achieve.