

### **3. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture**

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

Very well. That brings that part of question time to an end. We now come to questions to Ministers without notice. The first question period is to the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture and I call on Deputy Power.

#### **3.1 Deputy S. Power:**

The Minister will be aware of the excellent standards that are achieved by Les Quennevais School, both by students and by the management and it is one of the best regarded State Public Schools in the Island. Can the Minister advise the Assembly as to how far plans have progressed on a feasibility study to either replace the existing school with a new building or extend the existing school?

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

I thank the Deputy for his question. The situation with Les Quennevais School is one of my priorities. It is an excellent school and does very well, as he says. How far have we got with the feasibility study? It is ongoing. I cannot tell him exactly where it has got to as yet but what I can say is that unfortunately in this Medium-Term Financial Plan, there is no capital application for Les Quennevais School so we do have a little bit of time but I can reassure the Deputy that it is one of my main priorities.

#### **3.2 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:**

Does the department undertake risk assessments at all primary schools with regard to children's safety during the significant build-up of traffic at drop off and pick up times? If the department does not undertake risk assessments, why does it not do that?

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

I know the department carries out through the head teachers a whole raft of risk assessments at primary schools and I am 95 per cent certain that that will be included in that list of risk assessments. I would need to confirm it specifically about the question that the Constable is asking me and I will get back to her.

#### **3.2.1 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

Is the Minister aware of the problems in most primary school areas of the build-up of traffic and if so, how is his department working with road authorities to alleviate those problems?

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

Yes, I am definitely absolutely aware, particularly as the Constable mentions in her own Parish, there is a particular problem with St. Lawrence School but there are also problems at Trinity School and St. John's School in my own constituency and several others. We are working with the police and the local honorary police in each case and doing our very best to resolve them but it is not always the Department's responsibility. There is a shared responsibility with the Parishes as well and also with the honorary police.

#### **3.3 Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Last week, the Minister's department released some figures relating to G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) passes and my understanding is that the foreign language pass rate far exceeded the pass rate currently in the U.K. What is of more concern is that literacy rates appear to be falling and our English pass rate is now lagging behind the U.K. pass rate. In light of this evidence, does the Minister believe that that money that was agreed by the Assembly 2 weeks ago to pay for foreign language support in classes would be better directed at those town

primary schools that are struggling in particular in getting their literacy rates up among those students?

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Can I raise a point of order because I think the Deputy is not only mistaken but is also misleading the House because there was no sum that was agreed by the States Assembly. That is the whole point and she voted against it.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Deputy, it is a question and the Minister will deal with it.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

It is a very interesting question and one that I find quite difficult to answer. First of all, the Deputy is absolutely correct. The statistics for modern languages are considerably ahead of the U.K. at an overall pass rate of 77.9 per cent for modern foreign languages as opposed to the U.K. 71.2 and the Deputy is correct in that we are slightly behind the U.K. in terms of English passes for students passing 5 G.C.S.E.s A\*-C, including English and Maths. That is a concern. Let me address the second part of the question. That is a concern to us and, as the Deputy will know, we have initiated an English review to continue that we are scoping at the moment. It will go out to tender in the early part of next year. With regard to modern foreign languages, I was left in a position where the proposition or the amendment by Deputy Tadier was voted down although during the debate I did agree that I would find the money for £25,000 to do that. It is slightly confusing. At the moment, I am of the opinion that the majority of the House wished me to spend that money in that way and that is the route that I am taking unless, of course, I am told otherwise by the House.

**3.4 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

As a former professional educator, I was very disappointed to see that the Minister said he cannot support a couple of the items in my 28th September proposition. Could I just ask him to explain does he not accept that when he cannot support the creation of an award of £1,000 relating to writing or drama or whatever around political history and that in the Island, that that is quite different to what is already on offer, as he says, from the Jersey Arts Trust? We are talking about something specific here and deliberately so. Does he not accept that?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I think that I understand the Deputy's wish to try to reinforce his upcoming "Reform Day" proposal but I can confirm, as the comment says, that there is already money in place for at least 2 out of the several parts of his proposition. So I cannot support his proposition because the money is already there in respect of that. I think, as a general comment, there are many days and events in our local history that are deserving of recognition but with regard to the overall curriculum in schools, I would certainly be happy to bring it up with them in the future but the Curriculum Council has a statutory responsibility for covering the curriculum.

**3.4.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

Could I just push that because really I asked if the Minister accepted that this is asking for something specific and it is not a general thing as currently supported by the Jersey Arts Trust? I am not criticising that in any way. This is something specific. Does he not see the difference?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I am afraid I do not really see the difference, no.

**3.5 Deputy J.H. Young:**

Given the Minister's very wide portfolio of responsibilities, would he not agree that there is a danger that local culture could be rather overshadowed? He will be aware in that role that

Guernsey has secured Island Hospital TV series, Sark has secured Island Parish TV series, and could he tell the Assembly what his initiatives are to promote Jersey's valuable special local culture? [Aside] [Laughter]

**The Deputy of St. John:**

There are various things that we do in schools and it is quite extensive. There are things to do with Lé Jërriais, for example, that we do but my Assistant Minister, Deputy Bryans, has responsibility for that and I know that he is constantly looking for areas to expand our activity in this area.

### **3.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

It has been a year now and the Minister has settled into his job. I thought I heard a promise to see the results of the consultation on the way forward for education a month ago, was it? Has the Minister missed another deadline?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Unfortunately, yes, the Minister has missed another deadline and it is because I am afraid that we have within the department had a quite serious accident to one of our Project Managers that has ended up with that particular Project Manager being off duty until probably the new year. However, I have been successful in reallocating some time to the question that the Deputy is talking about and I am told that although we have slipped slightly, we should be publishing all of those results next month and before Christmas.

### **3.7 Connétable J.L.S. Gallichan of Trinity:**

I thank the Minister for confirming that there is a problem with traffic at Trinity School. If the Parish would supply land to alleviate the problem, would the Education Committee finance the forming of a car park?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

We do not have any particular budget allocation set aside for that but I am hopeful that it should not be too expensive but we will have to wait and see but the Constable is right. We have got a meeting with the Parish authorities lined up in the very near future where we will discuss it. We will have to see.

### **3.8 Connétable M.P.S. Le Troquer of St. Martin:**

Will the Minister advise the Assembly if there has been an investigation carried out to see if the department's procedures are satisfactory following the incident earlier this year when a teacher from Les Quennevais School, who was still teaching, was on bail for fraud offences in the U.K.?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I am afraid I am not familiar with this case. I cannot really answer the question properly but I will investigate it and get back to the Connétable.

### **3.9 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Will the Minister be taking the opportunity during the visit of His Excellency Al-Motawi, the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, to discuss the opportunities for Arabic tuition in secondary schools in Jersey or if not, the discussion of human rights education in both countries?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

That would be the responsibility of the Chief Minister's Department, I think, who has responsibility for international relations of all kinds.

#### **3.9.1 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Sorry, just to reiterate the question. So the question of Arabic tuition in secondary schools in Jersey is the responsibility of the Chief Minister? Is that what the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture is saying?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

There were 2 parts to the question and I perhaps answered the other half. As far as Arabic tuition is concerned, I know that our department officers and our Curriculum Council that I have already mentioned are focused on the different kinds of modern foreign languages that would be appropriate so we do not necessarily need to take it up with the Ambassador but it is on our radar screen.

**3.10 Deputy S. Power:**

I want to thank the Minister for acknowledging the excellent standards of education at Les Quennevais. Can he explain to the Assembly what happened to his capital allocation of about £8 million prior to the Medium-Term Financial Plan that was in the States accounts?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

From memory, it was in previous capital allocations and there was work done to refurbish the existing school in the not too distant past. I cannot remember exactly what happened to it but I do know that it is earmarked for being in the longer-term capital plan and I am guessing but I think it is around 2017 or 2018. That is as far as I can go with that answer, I am afraid.

[11:30]