

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

### **The Bailiff:**

Very well, so we come now to questions without notice and the first question is for the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture. Deputy Martin?

#### **5.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

There has been an announcement recently that there are 14 new primary school classes being put in across the Island. Can the Minister inform the House what will happen in 5 years' time, being that the age of schooling is 5, or 6 years' time when they move on to senior school? Where are the 14 extra classes going to?

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

The 14 extra classes are going 7 to D'Auvergne School, Mont Nicolle is already opening a new form of entry because it has got the space internally, but it does not have the space externally, so we are enhancing the external space to enable ...

#### **Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Sorry, can I just interrupt the Minister? I know exactly where the 14 primary, it was the after: where are they going on to in secondary school. That was the question.

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

Sorry, I misunderstood the question, I apologise. The secondary schools already have capacity. There is a reduction in demographic already starting to travel through secondary schools now and, in fact, if Members would care to look at the C.S.R. (Comprehensive Spending Review) savings, they will note that there is a saving for the department in C.S.R. in the secondary school area. So we already have the capacity in secondary schools and we will be able to cope with this new cohort in primary schools when they get there.

#### **5.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

I was messaged by a member of the public to ask why are no other Members asking about this serious issue with the shooting incident. I want to ask the Minister: we have just heard the announcement of the new chairman for the Committee of Inquiry into child protection failings, yet how are we sending out the message that things have changed? All the cover-ups at Haut de la Garenne, Victoria College and because of the court decision in finding this teacher guilty, the reality is that that individual will almost certainly fail a criminal record check if he were to apply for another job. That is the reality. Can the Minister give me some indication how he marries those 2 differing issues up? Because it just makes no sense to all the people who talk to me.

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

The P.E. (Physical Education) teacher was fined £1,000 in the Magistrates Court for careless use of an imitation firearm. The department has, as I have already said, completed one internal investigation and are in the process of the second internal investigation. The States policy is that these are internal, they are not to be put into the public domain and the reason for that is that this would not be fair on the individuals concerned. There is no cover-up. I would be very happy to make the Deputy aware of the results on a confidential basis if he wishes, but it would not be right or fair and the States Employment Board policies state as such, that these kinds of inquiries are internal inquiries.

#### **5.2.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

A supplementary, Sir? I am not implying that the Minister is indulging in a cover-up. I am pointing out certainly that careless discharge is entirely the wrong description; this is an

individual who took a starting pistol and discharged it in a gym where there was no reason. It was calculated, it was a conscious decision. He will fail a criminal record check; I know that from being a professional educator myself. How does the court's decision and the Minister's internal decision marry up? I am not asking him to explain all the details, but how does it marry up, because it does not.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

The Deputy has stated that a careless use of an imitation firearm was an incorrect court decision. I cannot make any comment about that. The Magistrates Court found that there was careless use of an imitation firearm.

**5.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Minister informs us that we need an additional 14 classrooms for primary schools in the future. As he knows, this is catering for the population of the Island and population is made up of birth rate, which has gone up over the past 6 years by something like 20 per cent, and the net migration numbers. What net migration numbers are his projections based on?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

The net inward migration numbers are very small in this calculation. The main part of the calculation for projected pupil numbers is to do with the birth rates that we know about.

**5.3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

If I may, Sir, a supplementary? The Minister must be aware that there are a whole set of projections for population produced by the Statistics Office in 2011. Which of those scenarios has been fitted into his projections for class numbers?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I think the Deputy is asking me to get embroiled in a premature debate on population. I am not prepared to do that. There is an existing States policy on inward migration, all departments at the moment have to work to that.

**5.4 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:**

My understanding is the existing States policy is 350 people per year. The question I wanted to ask, in answer to a written question that I had submitted, that there are 446 individuals over the age of 16 new to the Island in the last 3 months. Does that figure surprise the Minister? My question was really: how can you prepare for additional primary places when at the moment the States of Jersey are exceeding their agreed population levels anyway?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Whether I am surprised about inward migration figures is completely irrelevant. I have to find school places for children that are here when they turn up at the school gates. We know from birth rates what that is. There is not necessarily a direct connection between inward migration and birth rates.

**5.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Earlier, I was asking questions about Romanian nationals residing in Jersey and I would like to clarify, I am not Romanian-bashing; the reason why I am mentioning these things is because I am looking at the impact of immigration and population on the Island, and that is where I am coming from. So could the Minister tell the Assembly how his department is coping with the number of children whose first language is not English? Judging by the figures that we have been given today, it is an increasing number from many countries where their first language may not be English.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

The department has a special unit which deals with the question of English as an additional language. We put extra help into schools as necessary, but I would just caution the Deputy and all other Members of the Assembly, it is not necessarily true to say that just because a child does not have English as a first language that that child will not achieve. In fact, there are many young children who do not have English as an additional language that do very well in their schools and will continue to do so in the future.

#### **5.5.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

A supplementary, Sir? No, I was not asking about the fact that they will achieve, in fact, I taught many foreign students when I was in the U.K. and I would say that many of them were very motivated and did very well, so I have no problem with that. What I am asking about is the resources. Will the Minister tell us what resources he is putting towards teaching English for those whose first language is not English, the amount of resources and what he is putting forward for the future?

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

The department gets some help from the Portuguese Government as regards this; they pay for and fund several teaching specialists of Portuguese to help with English as an additional language. So a lot of work is done. I cannot give the Deputy the exact budgetary figures, if that is what he is looking for, I do not have that in my mind. I can get that circulated to all Members after today. I cannot give you the exact staffing figures. I know there are at least 5 teaching assistants provided by the Portuguese Government and there are several others. There is a department which is located at Rouge Bouillon School specifically for this purpose and some of those teachers go out to other schools as the demand presents itself in the other primary schools.

#### **5.6 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

In the answer to my first question, the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture stated there is plenty of capacity in our senior schools. Will he undertake to let Members know in writing which schools and how much capacity and will he also confirm that Haute Vallee School is not losing its proposed planned playing field for extra classrooms for an intake of these children as they come up through the system?

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

The answer to the first one is yes, I will certainly circulate that information. The answer to the second part of the question is, in fact, far from Haute Vallee losing its existing playing field, we are looking to enhance the playing fields at Haute Vallee School.

#### **5.7 Senator L.J. Farnham:**

I congratulate the Minister on the launch of the Sports Strategy; I think it is very good indeed. Can I ask if he will consider, though, bringing forward the proposals from 2015 to get the new sports board up and running perhaps sooner?

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

That is a possibility that we can look at; I am not sure if it will be possible at this stage, and there are some things that we need to get in train in 2014 in order that they will be ready for the Island Games in 2015, so certainly we will be starting on a lot of the infrastructure investment next year.

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

What concrete steps will the Minister take to alleviate the administrative burden on teachers in Jersey schools, especially the tick-box approach to monitoring every student in a class for something like 150 factors?

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

There are several ways that a teacher can manage the assessment of students under the teacher's control and the tick-box approach that the Deputy is referring to is only one of them, there are others. What steps will I be taking? As the Deputy well knows, because he clearly has information that other Members do not, there is an ongoing commitment to a careful investigation of the extra administrative burden that is taking place in primary schools by teachers, but I would say that all teachers, bar none pretty much - I do not know of any, let us put it that way - who are not fully supportive of the teacher assessment programme because it is already showing very good signs of improved performance and learning results from the students in primary school.

[12:00]

So it is not a question of administrative burden for no good reason, far from it. I think teachers accept that it is all working very well. It is a question that the department needs to check with schools and do an investigation into how that administrative burden can be managed best.

**5.9 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

The Minister said that after the incident with the starting pistol, all starting pistols were removed from the school. It is not the starting pistols that were causing the problem, it was the teacher. **[Approbation]** Would it not have been better to make sure all teachers knew procedures to do with starting pistols without taking away something which is totally harmless and unless it is used incorrectly? Does he really think this is a good psychological approach?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Yes.

**The Bailiff:**

I am afraid that brings questions to the Minister to an end so we move now to questions for the Minister for Health and Social Services.