

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE  
BY DEPUTY S.Y. MÉZEC OF ST. HELIER  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 17th JUNE 2014**

**Question**

Would the Minister provide a list of visits to the Island's secondary schools and 6th form colleges which have been undertaken since the beginning of the year by sitting States Members to talk to students, including which schools and on what dates the visits took place?

Could the Minister also outline the rules/ guidelines which determine whether a visit by a States Member to a school is appropriate, and what safeguards, if any, exist to ensure that no school is inadvertently biased in allowing some members more opportunities to meet potential young voters than other members?

**Answer**

The Education, Sport and Culture department does not keep a central record of visits to individual schools. Each school is responsible for organising its own timetable and for inviting guest speakers. This includes States Members. Teachers and head teachers are expected to ensure that students learn about the democratic process and social issues in a neutral environment where both sides of an argument are presented. This is a well-recognised principle among the teaching profession.

While politicians might be invited to talk about the democratic process in Jersey or as part of a debate on a particular issue being studied in the curriculum, they are not given access to younger voters for the purposes of canvassing. It would not be appropriate or democratic to provide captive audiences of young voters in schools.

However, it is recognised that young electors should have convenient opportunities to attend hustings outside curriculum time. Arrangements have been made to support this. During an election period, candidates who want to organise a hustings on school premises are able to do so and guidance to this effect has been sent to secondary head teachers. There are also guidelines for candidates. In the interests of impartiality, all the candidates for the position under discussion (Deputy, Senator or Connetable) must be invited to the meeting. This is to ensure that all candidates have equal access to the young voters who wish to attend. The guidance notes are attached below.

## **Guidance notes to secondary head teachers and the Principal of Highlands College**

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**Subject:** Protocols regarding access by candidates to school pupils over the age of 16 during electoral periods

**Issued by:** Minister of Education, Sport and Culture

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### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Since 2008, 16 year olds have been eligible to vote in elections to the States of Jersey. As most of this age group is in full-time or part-time education, this presents a number of issues for schools and colleges.

The following advice has been produced to guide schools. It applies at all times but head teachers will need to be particularly aware of it during the “pending period” for each election – which is from the date nominations open (noon on 05 September 2011) to the close of polls on election day on 19 October.

### **2. PRINCIPLES**

These guidelines are intended to assist the democratic process and to ensure that young voters are introduced to it as objectively as possible. The principles which underpin them are to:

- help young people understand the political process;
- encourage them to use their vote;
- ensure fairness and balance;
- avoid disruption to education;
- prevent young people being placed under any duress.

In applying these principles it is important to distinguish between educating young people about the electoral process and electioneering on behalf of a particular candidate or party.

### **3. GUIDANCE**

- 3.1 New electors have the right to be informed about the nature of the electoral process. If this information is given within the normal educational context, for example through the Citizenship Curriculum, it should be presented impartially without supporting any particular candidate, group of candidates or political party.
- 3.2 The Department for Education, Sport and Culture pamphlet ‘Register to Vote’ outlines the registration process and may be made available in schools for all first time voters.
- 3.3 During the election period schools should not invite or allow any candidates for election to campaign in schools. Pupils who are eligible to vote have the same opportunities as other members of the electorate to attend public hustings in their own time.

- 3.4 If an individual candidate approaches a school seeking an opportunity to address young voters, head teachers should decline the request. This is to ensure fairness to all candidates, avoid disruption to the curriculum and avert any potential concern about pupils being placed under undue pressure.
- 3.5 Candidates will not have the right to personally distribute leaflets or campaign on school premises. The school will provide a suitable display area/ noticeboard to display the candidates' manifesto brochure produced by the Privileges and Procedures Committee. This ensures the same format and amount of information is available about each candidate.
- 3.6 Teachers will be able to use leaflets and other electoral publicity as an educational resource if they wish provided they do not favour any particular candidate. They must ensure impartiality.
- 3.7 Voting registration forms can be made available in schools but it is the voters' responsibility to return their own form to the relevant parish hall.

#### **4. GENERAL**

- 4.1 These guidelines have been produced to ensure fairness and encourage electoral participation. They are unlikely to cover every eventuality. Head teachers may seek additional advice from the Director of Education, Sport and Culture.
- 4.2 The guidelines will come into force on 01 July 2011 in time for the beginning of the 2011 electoral cycle. They will apply to all elections held after that date.

# **Public Elections**

## **Meetings on school and youth service premises**

### **Guidance for candidates**

#### **School premises:**

School premises may be available for hire outside school hours for candidates who wish to arrange meetings with prospective voters.

In the interests of impartiality, all the candidates for the position under discussion must be invited to the meeting. This would mean all senatorial candidates and, in the case of Deputies or Connétables, all the candidates for a particular parish or district.

#### **Youth Service premises:**

Youth premises may also be available for hire outside youth session hours for candidates to hold meetings with prospective voters on the same basis.

Youth projects may also arrange meetings themselves if there is a request from young people who attend. If this takes place, the invitation will be issued to all candidates running for the same post (ie. candidates for Deputies or Connétable in the relevant parish, or for election as Senator) so that all candidates are treated equally and fairly.

Candidates interested in hiring out premises are invited to contact the school or youth premises directly to determine availability.

*Attendance at political meetings by young voters is entirely voluntary.*

**Education, Sport & Culture Department**