

2015.09.08

4.3 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding teaching vacancies:

What a joy it is to be back. Would the Minister provide an annual breakdown for the last 5 years of how many advertised teaching vacancies remained unfilled each September and detail how many teaching posts were filled by subject specialist graduates and how many were not, and advise what measures, if any, are being taken to fill vacant posts given the shortage of trainee teachers nationally?

Deputy R.G. Bryans of St. Helier (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

I hope I am not going to dampen the Deputy's joy at this point in time. Unfortunately our computer systems do not hold that level of detail but I can advise that the numbers of posts remaining unfulfilled at the start of this term are very small. In fact there is currently only one, which has just been advertised in the past week. Primary teachers are generalists. As for secondary teachers, all requests subject to specific skills and experience, if a candidate does not meet the criteria they do not get shortlisted. Locally we have been tackling the shortage of specialist teachers for 8 years through the Jersey Graduate Teacher Training Programme, which has already successfully provided 63 home-grown teachers, most of who are now working in our secondary schools.

4.3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister's computer accept that there will be a shortage of specialist teachers in secondary schools in the future because of nationally the absence of applicants for teacher training, and particularly in key subjects such as English and maths?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Yes, I do accept it is a problem. We are aware of the problem. We work very closely with the head teachers in particular. We contact them each year to identify where there is likely to be a subject teacher shortage and recruitment for the programme and then focus on those areas. So I am aware of the problem and we are working on it, particularly through the Graduate Teaching Training Programme.

4.3.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

What support is the Minister giving, or does he intend to give, in the future to the volunteer group, J.I.C.A.S. (Jersey International Centre of Advanced Studies) who are working to establish a Jersey university to include a Jersey teacher training college?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

I am not supporting the notion particularly at this moment in time of a separate university for the Island. We already have what we call Campus Jersey, and Highlands is already providing extremely great degree courses. We have 13 currently on offer. We are also working with Jersey International Business School, there is the Law College, and there is the ... we have recently passed through 17 nurses in the degree courses. So consideration of creating a university on the Island specifically for that is not on our agenda.

4.3.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Given the fact that nowadays anybody can ask such a question under the Freedom of Information Act and expect an answer at some point in time can the Minister advise when, we as parliamentarians, might be given the information sought in this question?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

The question came quite late in the day. It was received by us by Thursday afternoon so it was very difficult for us to assimilate the information that was requested.

Deputy M. Tadier:

And the second part of the question.

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

If further information is required then we can deliver it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It is not further information. It is the information: when can we expect to get the information that has been sought.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You have had the additional supplementary.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It has not been answered.

4.3.4 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

With the core reviews that occurred several years ago looking into the core subjects of Science, Mathematics and English, the review concluding that specialisms in mathematics and science needed to be bolstered within our teaching core, what is the Minister doing in order to support graduates who want to train in these areas, and whether it is not time to offer some sort of bursary scheme and post for our students so that we can grow them locally in specialisms which we know we will need.

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

I just refer the Deputy back to the fact we have this Jersey Graduate Teacher Training Programme and it has been run for 8 years rather successfully. We do provide bursaries for those students who are then going on to Masters degrees and the like. It is a consideration for our part that we pay very close attention, as the Deputy has already identified for those stem subjects, and that is predominantly provided through this Graduate Teaching Training Programme.

4.3.5 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I just want to refer to some data that the Minister provided to the Assembly on 14th April which referred to retention of teachers after they have been recruited and showed that actually within the first 2 ½ years a quarter of new teachers in Jersey are leaving the employment of the States of Jersey, which is broadly in line with ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

Is this a question, Deputy?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Yes, it is.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Perhaps you could get to the question.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Which is broadly in line with data in the U.K. that shows half of teachers are leaving within their first 5 years. So once we have actually recruited those teachers what is the Minister doing to ensure that we retain the best teachers in our Jersey schools?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

We are working very closely with teachers on this particular subject. In fact I think the numbers have reduced somewhat in terms of the figures that she has quoted, since we produced those figures. Obviously what we are always trying to do, the core part for me in all areas of education is teachers and providing teachers who are inspired and inspiring teachers provide high achieving pupils. So we work closely with them and have done recently on providing the new business plan and the new curriculum. So I think there is a lot more concern about retaining teachers at this point in time. I suppose the other thing to mention is the close partnership we have with the unions.

4.3.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

What measures other than a wage freeze does the Minister have in mind in order to encourage recruits for teaching, especially in specialist subjects, and to retain those specialists?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

I think it has probably been identified that newly qualified teachers coming to the Island are probably higher paid than those posts they would have received in the U.K. So that in itself is not particularly the incentive. The incentive is for people to come on to this Island because they think they are becoming part of a really good educational system.