

5.12 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Education regarding the relationship between a reduced pay rate for Newly Qualified Teachers and the overall pay structure for teachers:

How will the Minister incorporate a reduction in pay rates for Newly Qualified Teachers into the overall pay structure for teachers?

Deputy R.G. Bryans (The Minister for Education):

As Minister for Education, I am not directly involved in the negotiations. The details will be worked out by officers and negotiated on behalf of the States Employment Board.

[11:30]

There is an established reward team at central H.R. (Human Resources) who will do the majority of the background work in line with existing procedures and the negotiations will be carried out in partnership with the teaching unions.

5.12.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Minister aware that the removal of £8,000 from the salary scale for Newly Qualified Teachers takes the salary below that for unqualified teachers who could be in off the street? Is he aware of that and what does he propose to do to make sure that we do not race to the bottom and have unqualified teachers earning more than qualified teachers?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

As I say, I will not be part of the negotiations. We have already plotted out with the officers the route that we are taking; the Assembly has already had the debate regarding this in the M.T.F.P. Negotiations will be, as I say, with the States Employment Board and working with the unions, so it will be for them to make those sort of decisions.

5.12.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The Minister has said that he obviously will not take part in the negotiations on pay but does he have concerns about the impact there could be on morale for teachers if this leads to a 2-tier payment system? Does he believe that that detrimental impact on morale would not be a good thing to have in our schools?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Thank you to the Deputy for the question. Yes, we met with the unions on Thursday. Obviously they are quite upset about the decision that we have made but it is an open discussion that we have with the unions. We have got a very good partnership that we will keep on track as we go along. I understand his concerns about morale but at the moment, if Members will remember, when we put the survey out to teachers, 86 per cent of teachers in Jersey say that they are very happy with their situation currently.

5.12.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

In the light that the department, S.E.B. and the teaching unions cannot come to agreement and they cannot negotiate a settlement, what is the plan after that?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

I do not think there has ever been a situation where there has never been an agreement reached. I think there is some time to do this and I think there is quite a way to go before we reach a final conclusion but I do think that a conclusion will be met.

5.12.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

As part of the wider policy, the Minister talked about not just cutting the starting salary for N.Q.Ts. but also to incentivise recruitment in other areas. What incentives will be put in place to attract teachers where there is a perceived difficulty or an actual difficulty for recruitment? Will any new money be allocated to increase those starting salaries for those particular disciplines?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

It gives me the opportunity to remind Assembly Members that we have already begun the process of recruiting specialised teachers. Last year we recruited 4 science teachers from the Newcastle University and this year we embarked on recruiting 4 maths teachers. At this moment in time there is no incentive considered but that again will be part of the discussions to have with the union.

5.12.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

There is a serious risk, I believe, that we will end up with a 2-tier workforce of one paid at the old rates and one paid at the new rates. Can he, for example, assure Members that entry point 4 which currently stands at £39,418 will not be dragged down to accommodate the change in salary structure for newly-qualified teachers?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

There is no consideration to drag anything down. The situation that we have described is a negotiated salary for N.Q.Ts. and as I have explained previously, the N.Q.Ts. that come on to this Island come in at £38,000; that is at level 3. I am very fortunate within the department, because this is an area that the Deputy has raised before, we have an award-winning ex-head of an inner city school in London and the N.Q.T. start level, even if you are a degree student, is at level 1 at £27,000, so the consideration of dragging things down is not on our agenda.