

5.14 The Deputy of St. John of the Minister for Education regarding changes to the U.K. curriculum:

Given that changes to the U.K. curriculum now require more of students at a younger age, could the Minister advise whether teachers or parents have voiced any concerns regarding the effect of additional pressure on children to meet the new standards expected of them and, if so, how does he propose to alleviate such concerns?

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

Just to give Members a little bit of background for context, the Jersey curriculum was updated in September 2014 at the same time as the national curriculum for schools in England. The department has been working with teachers and teaching unions for some time. In fact, it has been an unparalleled consultation that we have had to make sure support is in place and the transition was as smooth as possible. There has been training, working groups and feedback and all of these are ongoing and to answer her question directly, other than the discussion we had at the last Assembly on a private basis, I have not received any direct feedback from parents or teachers.

5.14.1 The Deputy of St. John:

Thank you to the Minister for that answer. What does the Minister have in place to monitor and ensure over at least the next 3 years to identify whether there is significant pressure on the children and whether it is affecting their well-being going forward and their ability to achieve their potential and not the potential that is expected of them from other people?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

I understand the Deputy's concern and I totally agree with her that we need to put stuff in place that allows people to understand the concept and how children and parents would negotiate their way through this. Obviously, for the Education Department, it has been a time of immense change for us. After initial uncertainty, the feedback from our teachers at moderation meetings is that the changes to the new curriculum are manageable and that the new curriculum, particularly in English and maths, is better because it is more focused now and more directly aligned with assessment. Obviously change is not easy for everyone so we are supporting the teaching working force with extra training, updates and professional development. This is a change in emphasis and timing and not a complete rewriting of their job so our teachers are skilled professionals and the first point of recourse would be, if parents are concerned, is to talk to the schools and talk to the teachers.

5.14.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I understand for the secondary schools, the curriculum possibly needs to be aligned with the U.K. for exam purposes, but for primary schools at least could the Minister perhaps take a fresh look at the primary school curriculum and consider something which is more in line with what the public of Jersey want rather than following more so what the U.K. are doing?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Yes, in fact I have a meeting with the Jersey Curriculum Council a week today and I can raise this issue with them, but I am completely confident that what we have adopted in working and creating our own new curriculum - although the areas of English and maths are more consistent with the U.K. - is to produce the kind of things that the electorate of Jersey are looking for. I think Deputy Doublet comes from the position of making sure that the well-being of our children - and I am sure this is

true for Deputy Vallois as well - is paramount in the way we advance but it is really important that the address the problems that have been identified in fact in the *Times* front page just on Friday. It states: "Students in crisis over poor maths and English." So it is important that we move in the correct direction and take our teachers with us and the parents and the students.

5.14.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If the Minister was observing his headlines today, he will notice there are headlines saying that there is a crisis in teacher recruitment in the U.K. Does that also apply to Jersey?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Not at the moment. We have an oversupply of primary school teachers. We have some concerns with secondary school teachers but we are working our way through that at the moment.

5.14.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister knows full well we have always had an oversubscription for junior teachers but not for secondary school teachers. Is it getting worse?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Not at the moment, no.

5.14.5 The Deputy of St. John:

In answer to my second question, the Minister talked about the fact that the change is "manageable" and that always frightens me when somebody says "manageable." I think children are very adaptable to change, it just depends on the type of change. Does the Minister believe that for the way that we want an innovative, creative population going forward for diversity, not just in specific areas or industries but to allow them to grow for themselves, we have the type of curriculum we have in place, especially for primary schools, is appropriate for the future of this Island?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

I guess the short answer to that would be, yes, I do. In fact, I have begun my annual visits to all schools last week and I was with the Assistant Minister Constable Pallett visiting a school yesterday and I raised with the head that specific issue and she gave me the exam papers to have a look at. I think it is an area that gives me a little bit of concern. I think there are tricky exam papers but that having been said, in answering the question, the head said that she felt she had the right people with her, the right teachers and the right curriculum, understanding that the curriculum was a framework that teachers work within to produce the kind of things that the Deputy is talking about: creativity and innovation. So, yes, at this moment in time, I do think we have that right. Thank you.