

3.15 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Education regarding the prospect of including a sixth form in the new Les Quennevais School: [1(238)]

What consideration, if any, has been given to including a sixth form in the new Les Quennevais School and, if none, why has this not been considered?

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

It was considered at the very early stages of the project but was discontinued on the grounds that it would not be economical to create another sixth-form provider. We already have 5 schools offering A Levels, plus Highlands for other Level 3 and some classes are already very small.

3.15.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

While I would agree that under the current population and that we do have 5 schools, it has to be taken into account that 4 of those schools providing A Levels are fee-paying schools. That means there is only one sole sixth form in the Island, not including Highlands, which is slightly different, that provides a fully State school education at sixth form. Does the Minister think that, given the fact that there is now a pause with the plans for the new school, that it would be worth consulting with the public and also perhaps Members on whether or not in the future there is likely to be an increased demand on sixth form services, partly because there is a move to reduce subsidies for fee-paying schools, which is already in train, that middle-Jersey is being increasingly squeezed and may not have the funds in future to pursue fee-paying education and the simple fact that the population is due to increase?

The Bailiff:

Deputy, it is a question. Please, your questions have gone on and on today.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, thank you, Sir, but you just stopped me when I was making my final point, Sir, so ...

The Bailiff:

It is not a point, you are making a question.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you, Sir. That is the context of the question and that is the question, those 3 reasons.

[11:30]

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Yes, I mean in consideration of what happens in the future, obviously it will be taken to the heads, as it was previously or it has been recently. As I say, at that point in time it was not met with due consideration; it was thought that we had capacity. Equally, with regard to the building of the project or the new Les Quennevais School, we have about 780 students currently but the school is being built for capacity for 850. There is room for manoeuvre in the future should that decision be made.

3.15.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Just to ask the Minister whether he shares my concerns that fundamentally the school will not be big enough. He has given those figures there, 780, the school can accommodate 850; that does not seem to be big enough in the first place. Would he welcome some kind of consultation or even through an in-committee debate in this Assembly in short order as to the merits of having a sixth form included in this build for serving the west of the Island?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Yes, it is a consideration with regard to students who look to sixth form education, that what they benefit from is mixing with other and larger groups, which is currently what they have at this situation. Also, we need to make sure that the full range of A Levels is accommodated for. As I say, there is capacity within the new building. There is not a consideration at this moment in time to look at it through an in-committee debate. We have discussed it with heads and, as I say, we will remain focused on those 4 principles that we started out at the beginning of my term that is consistent with what we want to achieve.