

**4.3 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour of the Minister for Education regarding the work of his department to prepare young people to participate in the upcoming elections: [1(457)]**

Other than any work initiated by the States Greffe, what is being done by the Minister's department to proactively prepare young people to participate in the upcoming elections?

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

Thank you to the Deputy and thank you for his passion in this particular area. I consider that learning about the Island's political system and how to take part in it, it is a vitally important part of our education. It is now embedded in the Jersey curriculum for all ages and takes place throughout school life, not just in the run-up to elections. The subject comes under the citizenship strand of the P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social and Health Education) curriculum. Through this we expect students to acquire a sound knowledge and understanding of how Jersey is governed and how Islanders can actively participate in our democracy. To enhance the quality of lessons some staff had a meeting in June in this Chamber with the Deputy Greffier to discuss how they could help schools. We will be looking at refresher sessions of teachers, at developing teaching materials, and a form of hustings that will be more appealing to younger people than the traditional format. Schools also promote voter registration.

**4.3.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

I welcome all of that. It has certainly been a significant change from previous Ministers for Education, so that is noted. Specifically, can I ask what the department over the next 6 months will do to boost ... to focus on those between the ages of 15 and 19 who may not have had the advantages of the change to the P.S.H.E. curriculum since the change?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

It is worth drawing the Deputy's attention - in fact the whole Assembly's attention - to the actual curriculum, which is on the website in the P.S.H.E. including citizenship. I will just read out 2 parts which are: "The purpose of study. A high-quality citizenship education helps to provide pupils with knowledge, skills and understanding to prepare them to play a full and active part in society. In particular, citizenship education should foster pupils' keen awareness and understanding of democracy, government and how laws are made and upheld. Teaching should equip pupils with the skills and knowledge to explore political and social issues critically, to weigh evidence, debate and make reasoned arguments. It should also prepare pupils to take their place in society as responsible citizens." Then it goes on at the various key stages and I will just refer to the key stage that the Deputy is referring to, Key Stage 4: "Teaching should build on the Key Stage 3 programme ..." which is inherently teaching about the political system: "... of study to deepen pupils' understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Pupils should develop their skills to be able to use a range of research strategies, weigh up evidence, make persuasive arguments and substantiate their conclusions. They should experience and evaluate different ways that citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute to society." All of this in the same way that we do as ordinary citizens with access to the full media.

**4.3.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier:**

In his first answer the Minister spoke about promoting voter registration. Given that individual voter registration forms, as opposed to household voter registration forms, inevitably lead to fewer young people being signed up to vote, would the Minister want to see schools not only promote voter registration among their students but actively help them by providing them with the forms and offering to arrange for them to be delivered to the Parish Halls for them?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

Thank you to the Deputy for that suggestion. I mean it is one of the considerations that we have on the table at the moment, how far we go as a department encouraging students to get actively involved. Assembly Members may not know but I have a design thinking opportunity project running, starting on the 19th of this month, along with the Greffier, will be looking at electoral reform. Part of that I am sure will be the ability to do the similar thing as to what the Deputy is suggesting.

**4.3.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

Can I take it from that answer that he is not going to ask the schools to provide the option that I have just suggested, which is that the schools are able to deliver the voter registration forms for the students to the Parish Halls so that they do not have to take the effort, bearing in mind lots of these young people will not be able to drive, they are from all different schools and so visiting lots of different Parish Halls can be quite difficult if they are going out as a group. Do I take it from his answer that he will not be asking schools to do that and will be satisfied with having fewer young people registered to vote?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

No, I think he is making a rather grand assumption there. I did not say no to that. I said I would take it on board and have a look at that situation. It is a matter of timing and resource and it is particularly important that we give autonomy to the schools to make their own decisions in this particular matter.

**4.3.4 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:**

The Minister may have a citizenship programme but is it not the case that in practice it is not regularly taught and the reasons being twofold; it does not easily fit with the curriculum and there is a lack of knowledge and understanding of the electoral process, other issues with the teachers themselves?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

No, I think it is ... the notion of having a curriculum is this is what is taught within our schools and having it written in the way it is is very accessible. It is very accessible for not just the teachers and the schools to see but for also the parents and the children. It is important equally to amplify the role that parents play in the education of their children relating to our political system. But I am quite confident that this is being taught within the curriculum. It is worth noting at this point in time, this is a ... putting this into our curriculum was a positive step. It is not done in the U.K. (United Kingdom) and I think I remember what the Deputy was asking me some time ago when a particular teacher from Vic College used to run sessions relating to bringing Deputies in to talk about the political system. I think we have moved on from then and, as I said earlier, we have refresher training for the teachers coming up shortly.

**4.3.5 Deputy M. Tadier:**

The Minister will be aware of the successful Pride event which took place for the third year this last weekend, and we took the opportunity as Reform Jersey to sign up some 20 new ... most of them were new voters altogether and most of them will be 16 for the first time by the next election. That said, although we are obviously proactive in promoting democracy it is not necessarily appropriate for Reform Jersey to go into schools to sign people up, although we would happily do so, at the invite of the Minister, or any teachers who happen to be listening out there. But it does seem that there is a niche there for the very good work that is done by the Greffe in vote.je, to be extended directly into schools as a matter of urgency in the next 6

months approaching the election and at such events in the future, where there is a keen appetite for people to sign up in the non-traditional context where politics might not always seem obvious. Does the Minister agree with that and will he take on board to have urgent talks with the Greffe staff so that they can be the ones going into school, registering people right at the heart of where they are most likely to make the most difference?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

Thank you to the Deputy. I think I said earlier that we have had meetings with the Deputy Greffier totally in relation to this area and, equally, I mentioned that we have a design thinking project being launched on the 19th of this month that has at its heart ... one of the projects is to deal with electoral reform. So I am quite sure that in that opportunity we will have frank discussions between ourselves as to how we can promote further voter understanding with the children of this Island.

**4.3.6 Deputy M. Tadier:**

It is really a simple yes or no. Will the Minister ensure that in the next few months coming up to election there will be some people going into schools to actively register students to vote at key times, perhaps when they have their free periods, or P.S.H.E. lessons, so we got a maximum amount of young people, first-time voters, on the register for the next election?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

As I say, we will be having discussions with the Greffier to see if that is a possibility.

**4.3.7 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

When the Minister read out the curriculum - Key Stage 4 I think he said it was - I was a little disturbed to realise that he did not mention history, and surely the history of our system is a very important part of it and if you do not include it people do not know where our democracy has come from and why our particular electoral system is in the form it is. Why has he not got history in the curriculum?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

I have got history in the curriculum. It is covered in the first 3 stages, the Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3. I only read out Key Stage 4, which builds upon that. So just to make sure that the Senator is up to speed. This is in Key Stage 3: "The development of the political system of democratic government in Jersey and the United Kingdom, including the roles of citizens, the States Chamber, and the Island's relationship with the monarch" and that goes into the history of how this Parliament has been created.

**4.3.8 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

Back to 1204?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

Sorry, I missed that.

**The Bailiff:**

Back to 1204, Minister?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

Yes, it goes all the way through. It identifies what the unique place is of this Parliament.

**The Bailiff:**

I think perhaps to even 1066.

**4.3.9 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Minister did not promise to undertake any action. Could he outline what promotion did occur before the last election when 16 year-olds could vote in schools and what difference he will make in his decisions to promote voter registration in the coming election?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

I think first of all, going back, we have had discussions, as I say, already in relation to this political situation and the election that is forthcoming, with all heads of the appropriate schools and they have the autonomy to deal with voter registration, voting and the electoral situation in the way I have described through the curriculum and in any way they choose as heads of their schools in the appropriate manner. It was not part of the curriculum in terms of the previous Minister and the work that was done there. This is a brand new curriculum and we have made the Island centric and hence the reason for the inclusion of this. I still am in talks with the Greffier, as I have already outlined, and we will advance the discussion relating to these particular aspects as we move forward.

**4.3.10 Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

I appreciate the work that the Greffe will be doing but I did not want all of the work to fall upon the Greffe. Given that the Minister is still in discussions with the Greffe, will the Minister provide a statement, once a plan has been decided, so that States Members get full understanding about what the Education Department will be providing in the run-up to the election?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

Yes, I am quite happy to inform Members what decisions are made at that point in time.