

2017.01.30

4 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Education regarding negotiations with teachers' representatives in relation to teachers' pay scales: [1(86)]

What negotiations, if any, have taken place (including at what level and with whom) with teachers' representatives over the restructuring of teachers' pay scales and, in particular, the decision to reduce the starting salaries for newly qualified teachers; and, if none, why have none taken place?

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

Thank you to the Deputy. The intention is to discuss the employer's proposals for the starting salaries of newly qualified teachers with teachers' representatives in the near future. Without prejudice to those important discussions it is important to point out that the employer, the States, is not seeking to alter in any way the agreed salary scales for teachers. The issue to be discussed with unions concerns the level in the agreed salary scale that newly qualified teachers should be placed on when they start work. At present newly qualified teachers are placed on different levels within the salary scale on appointment. This needs to be reviewed.

4.4.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

It sounds to me like the Minister is going down the route taken by the U.K. (United Kingdom) authorities where they have abandoned the salary scales in some parts of the country and have a free for all in particular schools and particular types of schools where there are no minimum standard salaries; is that the case?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

No, it is not.

4.4.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister believe he has public support for the restructuring of teachers' pay that he is seeking to bring in or does he believe, like me, that the anecdotal evidence out there shows that the public generally think that teachers, if anything, are not paid enough or they are paid about right? Then if anyone's pay needs to be brought under control it is the top levels of the civil service, some of whom seem to be out of control in their wages and in the payment settlements that they get with golden handshakes ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

This is a question directed to the Minister for Education about teachers' salaries.

Deputy M. Tadier:

And that is right, and that is what I am asking ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

So it was: does he believe he has public support?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes.

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Thank you to the Deputy. At the moment, going back to the notion of it being anecdotal, the anecdotal discussions that I have had with various people is very finely balanced so some people have said they do not agree with the decisions that we have placed. Others did not really realise

what we were paying newly qualified teachers at that point in time and this has been a complete surprise to them.

4.4.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister agree that the figures he has released this week in response to a written question showing quite high levels of staff turnover in primary schools, in particular a primary school in my constituency, does he believe that further uncertainty and making it difficult for recruiting teachers across the board, will it exacerbate the staff turnover, which is already too high in many cases in these schools?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

There are a couple of comments. With regard to this turnover, the figures that we have supplied to the Deputy, it is concurrent with the figures that you would expect if you were in the U.K., so we do not see any aberrations. It is quite good for schools to have some sort of turnover because it allows newly qualified teachers to come in, if nothing else. But replying directly to his question: no, I do not see it being a deterrent. In fact just yesterday I was contacted by a young teacher who was Jersey born coming back as a newly qualified teacher, wanting to start in the primary sector. I explained to her the situation and she still intends to come.

4.4.4 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

The Minister vaguely touched on my question there. But is he at all concerned that locally qualified students have perhaps gone away, done a degree in teaching or P.G.C.E. (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) and were intending to come back to Jersey now may not as a result of this change? Even though I am mindful that the difference between locally qualified teacher salaries and U.K. were significant, now the gap has been closed does he have any concerns that some of those graduates may not now come back, although he has alluded to one that he knows of that is?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Thank you to the Deputy for the question. I do always have concerns because, as Deputy Southern has related, it is a bit of a problem in the U.K. with regard to recruitment so we are always keeping our eye on it. But what we have looked at is reducing the level down to a level, instead of a level 3 down to a level 1, which is around £33,900. Level 1 in the U.K. is £22,467. There is a considerable distance between the 2. It should not prevent teachers coming back to this Island.

4.4.5 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier:

Could the Minister confirm whether or not discussions on pay for newly qualified teachers was one of the subjects in discussion at a recent visit from representatives of the N.A.S.U.W.T. (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers) Union?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

Not, it was not.

4.4.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Notwithstanding the Minister's first answer when he said he is not changing the scales, just changing the place on the scales, does he not accept that the end result of his changing scale awarded will result in a reduction of salary of the order of some £6,000?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

As I have explained already, it is just the difference between 2 levels. Over the last 4 years we have been bringing newly qualified teachers at level 3, which is around £38,000, and the consideration ... and it is not appropriate for me to get into the detail of the discussions - that will be provided by the States Employment Board - but is to return it closer to level 1, which is around £33,900.