

22.10.04

**5 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for Children and Education regarding specialist subject teachers (OQ.94/2022)**

Will the Minister advise what gaps in provision, if any, have been identified in respect of specialist subject teachers across our schools and colleges with regards to the delivery of exam subject content and exam preparation for students in the coming academic year?

**Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North (The Minister for Children and Education):**

I would like to thank the Deputy for the timely question because 10 days ago I had a meeting with all head teachers, I have a separate group with the secondary school head teachers, when I asked them to provide to the department gaps in staff provision that they have. What was really helpful to the Deputy's question was when we looked into the specific of the specialist subject teachers. What I found out is that we do not have central records currently with the level of the detail for each school because the allocation of appropriate teachers are for the professional judgment of the head teachers to deploy. Now, to provide an accurate number of the gaps in provision as requested would require a specific definition for schools to work to and then manual collection, collating, analysis and quality check of the data. We must also be mindful that the schools' work for the current ... basically what I would like to say is thank you to the Deputy for the question and attention and I will commit to the Deputy and the Assembly to provide an accurate picture of the data by the half-term break.

**2.5.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

From the answer to that question, can I confirm then that the Education Department does not know if we have enough specialist teachers to deliver G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education), A-level, B.T.E.C. (Business and Technology Education Council) courses this year to our students through this academic year, because we do not have any information on that? Can we confirm that that is the case?

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

First of all, we rely on the head teachers to cover. Second, we need to really understand and I asked yesterday: "What is the definition?" The majority of the secondary teachers are qualified for one or 2 teaching subjects related to their degree and A-level or a level 3 subject. We have a teacher who has been qualified for 20 years, teaching and preparing for G.C.S.E.s in English and very successful results. During the course of their career it is common for colleagues to add subjects such as biology, chemistry, teacher taking up psychology. A minority of the colleagues have non-school curriculum subject degrees such as law, psychology and engineering and will be employed to teach, for example, business studies, sport psychology or mathematics. What we are trying to say is that the answer is not straightforward because there are variations and also, as the Deputy would know, the gap can occur very quickly when one of the teachers that was employed decided for health reasons to quit. The situation is changing. What is important for me as a Minister, and this is the reason that I am committed to provide, is we need to set clarity in this definition of what does it mean. I am happy to work with the Deputy, because the definition is not clear, what he means by the definition, how we quantify and to give this data back to the Assembly.

**2.5.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

I guess my question is to ask the Minister if she could give a clearer answer to Deputy Ward's previous question. He was asking about whether the department has enough teachers to do the

teaching that needs to be done. That is theoretically a yes or no question. I heard the Minister use the word “fluctuation” in her answer. If there is fluctuation then the answer is no, is it not?

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

I would like to confirm to everyone that all secondary schools in Jersey started this September with the proper timetables and sufficient staff to teach their pupils on the roll and the courses allocated to their timetables.

**2.5.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

Will that continue to be the case throughout the entire teaching year?

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

As previously requested - and I remember I promised to provide follow-up information - for the secondary teachers we have 39 supply teachers and we are increasing this pool. I have a table I am happy to circulate later. This is the reason I would continue to have ongoing communications with the head teachers to make sure that we support them with staff in front of the classes.

**2.5.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

I thank the Minister for supplying the quite shocking statistic that there are 39 supply teachers currently operating in our secondary schools. But I ask does the Minister accept that teaching by specialist teachers is an important factor in delivery what are good results so far, and will she assist head teachers rather than them scrambling around for teaching staff from wherever they can get them? Whether they should centrally assist head teachers to maintain numbers of appropriate qualified teachers?

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Absolutely, I will support head teachers and on top of this I would like to bring the Deputy’s attention to that in addition we offer ... from this year we are centrally financing subjects to enhance courses for specialist courses where we have gaps to enable more generalist graduates to refocus their curriculum knowledge on school subjects and to retrain them from one specialist degree to another to ensure that we will have outgoing support to the head teachers.

**2.5.5 Deputy G. P. Southern:**

Does the Minister not consider that that puts added pressure on staff when that could be taken off by adding some form of bonus scheme for particular subjects, in particular for particular teachers.

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Apologies, I did not describe it exactly but we have bursaries for the teachers ... for the graduates who would like to specialise and they will be available. It is extra training going this year. If you look at the numbers that were published, in 2020 we have 10 trainees, 2019 we have 8 trainees, 2018 we have 8 trainees but in 2022 we have 24 trainees. It means that we are working to ensure that we have more specialised teachers trained in Jersey.

**2.5.6 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I will simplify the question for this one. Can the Minister confirm that any student in a core subject for example of maths, English, biology, chemistry, physics or combined science will be taught their exam courses by a qualified specialist teacher this year?

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

What I would like to confirm is that, as in previous years, our results were outstanding, that the children will be taught to the best possible achievement they can get. What is important and, again, I am inviting the Deputy to work with me for the definition because the definition is varied between different places and the moment that we agree on the definition I can confirm yes or no for this specific effect.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Sir, I do not believe that is an attempt to address the question. This Minister has avoided it altogether.

**The Bailiff:**

So you are asking for a ruling as to whether that was an answer to the question? The question was a confirmation, I think, Minister, that all of the secondary students will be taught by specialists for their core subjects. I think that was the question, was it not, Deputy?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

It was.

**The Bailiff:**

You did mention a lot of things you would like to confirm but I am not sure whether you indicated that that was. It may be that you cannot but if you can I think it would be ...

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

This is what I indicated, that we need to finalise specific definitions for schools to work with, then we will do manual collection, collating, analysis and quality of the data, and I promise to provide this to the Assembly by the half term.