



Education and Home Affairs Panel

Quarterly Meeting

MONDAY, 2nd MARCH 2015

Panel:

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour (Chairman)

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour (Vice Chairman)

Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier

Witnesses:

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture

Head of Lifelong Learning and Skills, Department of Education, Sport and Culture

[10:05]

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour (Chairman):

Okay, well, let us begin. Thank you all for being here today. This is the quarterly public hearing with the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel, and we are asking questions of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture today. I will ask my panel to introduce themselves, first of all. I am Deputy Louise Doublet, I am the Chairman of the Panel.

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Yes. Good morning. Vice Chair of the panel, Deputy Jeremy Maçon of St. Saviour, District Petite Longueville.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier:

Sam Mézec. I do not have a title for this panel, unfortunately, but I am Chairman of Reform Jersey and Deputy of St. Helier No. 2.

Scrutiny Officer:

I am Mick Robbins, Scrutiny Officer.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I am Rod Bryans, Deputy of St. Helier No. 2 and the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture.

Director, Education, Sport and Culture:

Justin Donovan, Director of Education, Sport and Culture. Good morning, everybody.

Head of Lifelong Learning and Skills, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Andy Gibbs, I am head of Lifelong Learning and Skills at the Department for Education, Sport and Culture.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is really nice to see some people viewing over there. Welcome to the press and public. Can I just remind everybody to switch their phones off, please, if you have not done so already, and there is the code of conduct too when we are having our hearings. Minister, you have a statement in front of you. Could I just check that you have read and understood that?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I have a statement in front of me. Yes, thank you.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is slightly unusual today because we are starting with a briefing from the department, so I just wanted to confirm with you that you are happy that is in public and recorded? Okay. And we are very much looking forward to the briefing, which we have been looking forward to for a while, so we are expecting something really interesting. So we will hand over to you for that in a moment. We are really keen to stick to timings today, so we have said half an hour, have we not, so maybe, Mick, if you maybe just give them a little hands-up at about 25 minutes into the presentation?

Scrutiny Officer:

Yes, certainly.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

We are listening. I think I have covered everything I need to, so over to you.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Okay. Basically, the presentation you are going to see is one that the Director has been giving to various departments, various members of the public at various places. It is very much in line with what we have set out, the 4 principles, which is about raising standards, changing the curriculum, making it more local, giving more autonomy to the schools and focusing on family. So as you are tight for time, I am going to ask the Director to get up and do his thing. Thank you.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Okay, I will get up if you do not mind, if that is all right, so I can see the screen there?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

That is fine.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

So what I am going to do then is give you some facts and figures about the kids, because we are all about children, so I think it is very important the Scrutiny committee understands the nature of the young people we are working with and, as the Minister says, home in on those 4 key priorities. I know you are aware of those 4 key priorities, so what I am going to do is give you some feedback on our action plan and to give you some examples of things we are planning to do. Firstly, there is a lot of discussion in Jersey about the fact that we have a lot of kids going to selective and fee-paying schools; that is true, but not quite as true as people make out. So 42 per cent of our secondary school pupils go to a fee-paying school compared to about 7 per cent in the U.K. (United Kingdom). The thing to bear in mind though is this is less selective in a sense than the U.K. because those 42 per cent of children are coming from a much smaller pool than across some of the U.K. and, because it is a larger cut, if you like, we have got young people in our fee-paying schools of lower attainment than would be the case in the U.K., and I think that is important to bear in mind. It is smaller in the primary schools, about 27 per cent; just under a third. It is very, very high. There are other communities with similar set-ups, so for example if you go to Watford, just north west of London, you will find there are 13 secondary schools there and all but 2 of those are selective. So it is not unique to Jersey, but it is certainly unusual. It is important to bear that in mind when we are talking about young people here. That is our overall population as of 1st September 2014, so the current academic year. It is a normal curve of distribution with 2 slight differences: if you look at the figures in detail, and I am happy to go through them, it shows we have got a slight bulge. You would expect more in primary than secondary because of the number of year groups, nevertheless, it shows we have got a slight bulge coming through primary, which is heading towards our secondary schools and therefore we need to plan for that. It also demonstrates we have got a slightly smaller than the U.K. number of young people in our special schools, and that is to do with the inclusive nature of our schools. I find the schools in Jersey very,

very inclusive indeed, and I will come back to that. So that is our profile of age. In terms of post-16, it is very unusual here in Jersey compared to most places. We have Highlands College with just about 1,000 young people in it, and then we have Hautlieu with a sixth form of 500 and then we have 4 other very small sixth forms, and that is worth bearing in mind. Financially, if you have got a sixth form, roughly speaking, of less than about 200 to 250 young people, it does not sustain itself financially in terms of the number of young people in classes, the impact on libraries, I.T. (information technology) systems and the rest. So what you will tend to find, if you have got sixth formers certainly below 200, but I would argue below 250, you will find that these young people are being subsidised by the very young children. There is no way around that; it is not a criticism, it is an observation, I think it is fair to say. If you look at our sixth form numbers, it would be unusual anywhere else to break them up into 6 providers. These are our projections. You will find that in terms of the number of young people hitting our secondary schools, up to about here we are fairly accurate because we know these children, we know where they live, we know their date of birth; the rest is a projection, it is a forecast. It is called a forecast for a reason: it might not come out that way, but we are looking at a plan for a big increase in the number of young people in our secondary schools, and that is something perhaps we need to talk about in the coming months. In terms of capacity, I think it is important for Scrutiny to understand we are close to capacity. So capacity is in the red, or the dark colour, and our current number of students ... this is as of 1st September 2014. Les Quennevais, as you can see, is almost full, Haute Vallée there is a little bit of room, Le Rocquier is our biggest school on the Island and it is getting full. It is important to bear this in mind, because as that growth comes through into the system we have some capacity to take up that growth but not sufficient capacity if that forecast is true. We have got a long time to plan for it but, nevertheless, we need to bear that in mind. Sticking with post-16 education, Highlands College, you can see, is now well over capacity. It is in buildings which were not designed to take the number of young people we have in there. It is based in buildings which are not designed for the curriculum that we are delivering today. It is a campus which has evolved over time, as is the case in F.E. (further education) colleges across the world, and Hautlieu is full. So in terms of capacity post-16, there is an issue for us and, again, we are looking to plan ahead for that. A lot of conversation is shifting now to inward migration; there is a lot of conversation about young people coming to the Island, particularly without English as a first language. So here is the number, this is from 2008 up until 1st September 2014. All of this data is up to the start of the current academic year. So just over 800 young people of all ages joining our schools in the period at that time, but we also have had just over 300 young people leave, so our net migration is around about 500 since 2008; it is not enormous amounts, it is not as big as sometimes the conversation would suggest.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Can you just clarify how that is calculated? Is that done by people as soon as they arrive and entering into the school? So, for example, it might not take into account a toddler, or something, who then progresses into the system. Can you just explain that?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Correct. Absolutely. So these are young people who hit our schools from 5, so it does not include nursery, or anything other than that. So, for example, of a family of 4 or 5 children, maybe only 2 of the children are in these figures.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Okay. Thank you.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

In terms of countries, there is a lot of discussion about Poland, Portugal and Madeira, but you will see 270 of those young people have come from the U.K. and not from the other countries, and if you take Madeira, Portugal and Poland, and bear in mind this is since 2008, we are talking here about 200 or so young people, 250 maybe, of that total.

[10:15]

These are the countries where we have got 10 children or more that have joined us since 2010, so it is quite a wide spread. So, first of all, the issue of young people coming to the Island, I think sometimes the numbers are not quite as big as people sometimes suggest, and also there is a much greater spread in terms of the countries they are coming from than is also sometimes suggested. These young people make our schools very interesting places to be, and we can talk about that if you like. In terms of additional language, though, when they arrive at our schools, they are not evenly spread. So if you take our primary schools, for example, around about two-thirds of the young people in Rouge Bouillon have not got English as a first language and therefore there is an issue there for that particular school. As you come down to Victoria College, St. Martins, J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls), very few numbers. Because these young people do not have English as a first language, it does not mean they do not speak English, some of them speak English relatively well, some of them speak English not at all; it varies significantly. These figures are where a family have said that: "English is not our first language." Secondary school, as you can see, an awful lot of these children, not quite half but certainly over a third, are in Haute Vallée, Grainville, Le Rocquier, so it is our 11 to 16 schools that have most of these young children. There is an issue for us in terms of supporting these young people: this is not seen as a problem for the Department; people keep using that word, it is not a problem. We are here to meet the

needs of all children; some children will have an issue about their spelling, making friends, some pupils have an issue with language, and we will adjust our support to make sure we deal with whatever their needs are. The kids I am most concerned about though are the young people who come to Jersey and join our secondary system without English as a first language. What we tend to be really good at is getting them to function so they can say good morning, they can participate in the daily life of the school, but when you are sitting in history lessons and geography lessons, some of these young people are not able to engage in the debate, which is an important part of the learning, and so we need to look at the support we are providing these young people at secondary schools, and it has an impact on their G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) results. Switching to spend, it is quite interesting... and this is just an observation of fact, so if you have a look at the amount of money we are spending per head of pupil in our secondary schools, it ranges from about just under £8,500 down to just over £6,000, and that is including the money we have in terms of top-ups in S.E.N. (Special Educational Needs).

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Can I just ask what is the A.W.P.U. top-up?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

The age-weighted pupil unit. So for each age the children are at, we will fund the school on the number of places at A.W.P.U., and it varies as the children get older. There is an assumption that it is more expensive to educate children in secondary school than primary; it is an assumption I intend to test here in Jersey in the coming years. I am not sure it is as clear as we make out. But, to be blunt, you will see the children with greatest need in our secondary schools have the least money spent on them but, to be fair, this is because here parents are paying to send their children, so you would expect there to be more money in the system for those young people.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Can I just ask again, so the fee-paying schools, that yellow bar, that is not split up by what the department pays?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

No.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Have you got this graph, where it is split?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

No, but we could produce it for you.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

That would be great. Thank you.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

That is just simply the amount of money that has been spent, okay, so it is just to state the fact. The reason it is important is when you start comparing outcomes in terms of G.C.S.E. results, in terms of greatest need therefore less likely to get 5 A stars to Cs, less need, most likely but more money being spent. It just helps interpret some of the results we get out of the system, which I will come to. S.E.N in our primary schools, and it is interesting I think: if you look at Janvrin, excellent school, I would fight to get my kids in there, but it is dealing with a lot of special education needs and a lot of vulnerable children. There has been some really interesting work, so it has its own family support worker; sorry, I am getting into detail and we have not got time for that. But you will see that the greatest need of our most vulnerable children tends to gather in about half of our schools and they tend to be the 10 schools. Nothing unexpected in that. Secondary S.E.N., again, nothing that you would not expect. What is interesting, take Hautlieu for example, there is a school which is selective, it is an excellent school, does a great job, but they have identified something like 20 to 25 young people with mental health issues, and that is a growing number, it is a new issue for Hautlieu; what they are saying is 5 or 6 years ago that was not the case. So there is some vulnerability in all of our schools but, nevertheless, a lot of that vulnerability does collect in our 11 to 16 schools. So the great majority of children with greatest need are there. Some of these schools do some fantastic work in making children welcome and making sure they thrive rather than just survive in the education system. So that is a description of the young people in our system and, as you can see, it makes it a very interesting place. The Minister mentioned the 4 key priorities we are pursuing, and I know as politicians you will be aware of those. What we have been doing is meeting with our head teachers; we have had 16 half-day sessions with all of our head teachers and they have all been invited and most have been involved in taking those 4 key priorities and agreeing what it is we need to do over the next 3 years or so to make an impact. I am going to dwell a little bit on standards, because that is the biggest issue. If you remember what I have said in public is that we should be above the U.K. measures on every single educational outcome; there should be no educational outcomes in Jersey which are below the U.K. average. Some of our outcomes are above, so our L.E.A.P. (Learning Evaluation and Planning) rates are extremely low, which is great, we have good attendance rates; there is a whole range of data which is above the U.K., but some of the key data is below. So, for example, the number of younger people getting 5 A stars to Cs, including English and Maths, is below by 4 percentage points than the U.K.; that is not good enough, it should be above. So here are the things we are going to do: there are 4 things we are putting in place, one of them is your question. We are putting in arrangements to monitor the progress children are making. What we are looking to

introduce is a single Island-wide tracking system which tells us not how the children have done at the end of a key stage, but how they are doing so we can alter our teaching. One of the examples I give heads, and there are lots of examples like this, I as Director, and my senior management team and the head teachers, should understand the strengths and frailties of each of the year groups that we have, it is only 1,000 kids, so we should be able to say to the primary heads: "Do you know the number of kids in year 4 that are not reading for fun?" for example. They need to be reading for fun by the time they get to secondary schools otherwise they never will, and that is going to cost them half a grade across the board. So we do not have a system yet that tracks how the children are doing, that tracks their progress. We need one and we need one quite urgently. We want to make sure it is based on the schools' existing systems; they have invested time and energy and kit into some really good systems which have been invested into in the last 2 to 3 years, we could build on that. Single entry: so teachers in a classroom will have an iPad and as they are working with kids they can just touch the iPad. It goes straight into the assessment system, it goes straight into our system at the centre, parents can have access to it. At the moment they are spending their evenings transferring data, handwriting into spreadsheets, and it is taking them ages. We need a routine system so that we can exchange information as children move between schools and, rather than the States of Jersey producing an e-table, what we are doing is introducing a standard template that once a year every school completes, and it will be pre-populated with their attainment data, and schools describe their strengths, their challenges, what it is they are trying to achieve, so that the results we have are set in context so that we can have informed, proper discussions about how schools are doing. If we go back to the way the children are spread out in terms of the data I was showing you, a single way of reporting on our schools is not helpful because they are so different. So having a single template which gives a narrative around what schools are trying to achieve, I think is very important. Secondly then, so we need to monitor what the children do ... sorry, I could not resist this little thing; it reminds me of my Minister **[Laughter]** on a Monday morning. We need to challenge the profession from top to bottom as we go through it. So at the moment what we tend to do is assess the children on entry, say till secondary school, and work out what G.C.S.E. results they are likely to get in 5 years' time. So we predict an outcome. What we should be doing is saying: "Okay, that is the predicted outcome; we have got 5 years to improve on that. Knowing what we do about these children because of the data, what are we going to do with this particular year group and this particular school over the next 5 years to get them from a predicted outcome to a stretching target?" That is something that we really need to get into our blood and bones. We are looking to expand our school improvement team; it is tiny at the moment, so we have got 2 people arriving, one of which is an ex-senior H.M.I. (Her Majesty's Inspector), he arrives in June, and we have somebody else arriving in May to strengthen that team. So we will have more, if you like, boots on the ground to work with schools, to challenge what schools are doing, to ask difficult questions ...

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I beg your pardon. H.M.I.?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Her Majesty's Inspector, so the U.K. So we are on the dark side at the moment on inspector skills, but we have seen the light and they are coming to Jersey. The second thing we are looking to do is embed experienced teachers in our system. So, for example, one of our secondary head teachers is going to work with us in the system as a member of our team developing one of his key priorities, which I will come to in a moment. The head teacher of First Tower School sits currently on our S.E.N. Senior Management Team, feeding into it the views of head teachers and taking the work of that team back to head teachers; it is going to blur the edges between officers and head teachers, because that is where the expertise lies. Then we will retain the need now and again to bring in some external expertise. I am not a fan of external consultants coming across to Jersey; we have a lot of experience here and sometimes we spend as much time explaining Jersey to people as they do in terms of assessing what we are doing. We have a moderation process here for making sure that teachers' assessments are consistent across the Island; we are going to strengthen that. It is an extremely good system, it is better than anything I have seen anywhere else, and I have seen a lot of systems. We need to extend it so more teachers are involved. So we are going to monitor what the kids are doing, we are going to challenge the profession to basically improve on those results. Thirdly, we are putting arrangements in place, or strengthening existing arrangements I should say, to support our schools' staff; we spent a long time looking at this. We have got some fantastic practice here in Jersey, some of the best I have seen anywhere, not just in the U.K. but elsewhere in Europe, we need to bottle it up and make it available to every single teacher and put it in their hands. We are going to look at increasing professional development time; we only get 2 days here in Jersey, the U.K. teachers get 5. We need to do something about that so that teachers have more time to train. We are looking to provide a professional conference every 2 years where we bring the whole profession together in one place: teachers, T.A.s (teaching assistants), everybody involved with education, to talk about what we are doing and how we are going to improve it. We are looking to improve our teacher recruitment process; at the moment it is a bit clunky. We ought to be putting the best possible teachers in front of our children, we need to improve on that. We must reduce the administrative burden on the teachers and head teachers. We are asking them to do stuff which does not have an impact on the children's outcomes, and we need to change that. The thing with teachers and head teachers, if you stop giving them administrative tasks, they do not go home earlier, they will still work unreasonably long hours, but they will work on what is more appropriate for the children and it will have a big impact on attainment. So the third strategy is support in place. When we trip up, when it all goes wrong, we then need to intervene, not in a heavy-handed way but in a positive, supportive way. The 3 things we have agreed we are going to do here is, one, we are going to

build in this early alert system through the monitoring arrangements; rather than wait for things to go wrong, if we track the progress of children in a community, in a school, one class in a school: "Well, this is not working. How are we going to change it? What expertise do we have outside the school, outside of this community to bring in to make a change?" So that when we get to the end of a key stage, the kids have moved on, rather than they get to the end of a key stage, the results are disappointing, and we have an autopsy of what went wrong at an earlier level. So we can intervene as quickly as possible. We have a protocol in place at the moment, but it is a bit long, so we need a nice one-sided A4 agreement between schools and officers: "What do we do when performance is not working? What do we do to break that down?" and making sure we have got the capacity to intervene. So those are the 4 strategies to raise standards. We are going to monitor the children's progress very carefully; we are going to challenge schools, teachers, the systems, to do better. We are then going to support schools, teachers and the systems to do better and then, if it does not work, we will have a system to intervene quickly, early enough to make a difference. That is the first area. The others I will talk to a little bit; sorry, I cannot resist. I think you can design an educational system around there being greater freedom. I have said this before to you, Chair, but we over-control our schools. What I have said to our head teachers, I want them to be bold, imaginative ambitious, and you cannot do that if you are making decisions for them. So we need to free our schools up to give them greater freedoms and autonomy. I am not talking here about academies and preschools in the U.K. system, I am though talking about giving schools the power over their own destiny and giving them an opportunity to make decisions, particularly about how they spend their money and who they employ and how they employ, within a standard set of teachers' terms and conditions of employment. At the moment, for example, if the head teacher decides that he or she would like to give a member of staff a year off, so to go off, refresh themselves and come back, they have to ask my permission.

[10:30]

That is not reasonable. If they want to take 2 part-time posts, if people are going and wanting to combine them into fulltime posts, they have to ask my permission. These are decisions head teachers ought to be making without having to come back to me and, if we are not careful, we drive out that instinct to be imaginative and creative by over-managing. I suppose what I am saying is: to be a leader rather than a manager, you need to be able to make decisions, and at the moment our head teachers are not allowed to make those decisions. We need a conversation about what that looks like in Jersey, we need to make sure that, before we free schools up, they demonstrate that they have got the skills and capacity to do so. If we are going to give schools greater freedom, then we need greater accountability. The easiest and most obvious way of doing that is to extend the role of governing bodies and make sure we train our governing bodies up. I am not convinced that the market approach which works in the U.K. will work here, because we

are not big enough and the economies of scale do not exist. Our particular focus will be on money and recruitment and retention of staff, because if you are going to run an organisation, control over who works for you and how you are going to spend your money are the 2 biggest issues. Those are the 2 things over which schools have least control. The third area is reshaping the curriculum. There are 2 elements of this: we have decided that not only should our children be learning about the history, culture, geography of the Island, they should be learning from it. There is some great work going on, if you go round our schools, I could point you to some spectacularly effective work, but it is a bit ad hoc; it depends on the knowledge and enthusiasm, sometimes the links that individual teachers have. We need to have that so that we have, if you like, an entitlement for young people, so at certain ages they have the entitlement to experience certain things. The Minister and I later this week are talking to a voluntary group who run the German Bunker system, because if we agree as a curriculum group that children need to experience what it was like to be in one of those bunkers, we need access to them so that we can write it into the timetables. So the idea of Jersey Passports, so that children can, as I say, track their progress through the Island's history and culture. Secondly, we are working with industry, or we have done that work to reorganise our curriculum so that it is more closely aligned to the economy. Here are things that we have agreed to do: we are going to map our existing progression routes; in fact, we have already done that up to 16; we are now looking to do that 16 to 18. Agree some key principles of what those progression routes should look like; for example, you could say young people starting a course at 16 should only have a course available if there are progression routes to 18, so there are not any closed doors, if it is financially viable long term. Once we have got those key principles, we are going to map a future vocational programme for the Island. We are looking to establish not necessarily an Education/business partnership, but the functions of an Education/business partnership here in Jersey. That is an organisation that brings together functions such as work experience, Young Enterprise; a whole range of schemes which link industry and education together. We do not quite have that in Jersey. We have most of the functions, but they are dispersed over a number of departments. Finally, we want to do some more work on family-focused services. The last time I spoke to members I was explaining that in Jersey we have more vulnerable families than I was expecting, families who care very much about their children, their children are not in any danger as such, they are clearly loved, the parents are very, very busy holding down several jobs, they are living in cramped accommodation. That has an impact on these children. So rather than deal with individual children, we are looking to deal more effectively with departments. So you will know about 1001 Days; that is a good example where departments have come together and focused on supporting the family's vulnerabilities and problems rather than dealing with the outcomes of that, child-by-child. A good example: we were in Le Rocquier recently and the head was talking to us about a young lad who joined them in year 7, and they worked really, really hard to change the behaviour of that young lad, who is now engaging with the curriculum. It has cost them time, energy, money, and this year the little sister pops up; same

problems, and they are going to start all over again. In 2 years' time, another brother will arrive. So for 10 years they can be working with the difficulties this family has got; it is much better to deal with and support the family in the first place. So those are the kind of things we are going to do in terms of family-focused working. That is the nature of the children we have in our system, those are the 4 key areas and those are some of the things that we have said with head teachers we are going to be doing over the next 2 to 3 years to address them. Okay?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you very much for that, Justin, and I think the panel will agree with me that was very informative and I think very honest as well; that was a very open appraisal of some of the issues. I feel very positive about most of it. I have also written down about 20 extra questions I want to ask you, so there we go. Okay, so you have had the general areas that we are going to question you on, and the first question is on the savings that you have been asked to make. So the Chief Officer's circular dated 16th February 2015 suggests a saving of 1.5 per cent each year from 2015 to 2019. Is Education going to be exempt from these savings and, if not, how will the Minister deal with that?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

So we are not exempt from the savings, as Health is not exempt from those savings. We are exempt from the second round which is being contemplated, ourselves and Health. We are looking for savings around £10.7 million. We have done the exercise, we have got the figures, but what we have not done is gone through the triaging of that: sitting down with Treasury and working out what is the best route through this, because the dialogue is there but we have not had it yet, so that happens within the next couple of weeks.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay. So can I just have your initial thoughts then: as we have seen from your briefing, we are having this bulge in numbers of children going through the system so their numbers will be rising and people are staying in education longer. I think the majority of most schools' budgets goes on staffing. How is it going to be possible to make these cuts, and just from your initial dealings, where do you think that is going to come from?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think there are 2 issues there, one is the bulge: I think the Director has given you a good example of what is available in terms of capacity, and I think as an ex-governor of Haute Vallée in particular, we are always aware of the fluctuations and schools' ebb and flow; it is the stuff that takes us by surprise which is difficult. But in the context of the schools themselves, most of them can adequately cope with the change in this particular bulge. Moving beyond the bulge itself, we

have really then got to carve through ... as you have already identified, the biggest problem is most of the schools', most of Education's budget is on income. So I think the best thing is to pass to the Director in this particular case, to just outline some of the areas that we think are the biggest concerns at this point.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, the £10.7 million savings is worrying; there is no way round it, it is going to be painful. We have literally just started this work, so we are probably 2 or 3 weeks away from coming up with final ideas, but we are looking to protect our schools and take the cuts as much as we can at this centre. Probably the best thing to do once we have done some more detailed work on this, is to brief you separately to keep you in the loop, but we are a few weeks away from that. You point out the growth in numbers; in addition to the cuts, we have growth bids in which are still there, and we have made a bid for growth, as well as making cuts. One of the reasons that the cuts are so significant in the second round is because there are growth bids built into that. Our growth bids tended to be more to do with pressures. So we have worked out how many young people are coming into the system and roughly how many teachers we are going to need to put in front of them. As the Minister says, we have got spaces but not necessarily the teachers, and those bids are still intact. So we are working on the basis that our growth bids around pressure in terms of the numbers of young children coming through will add to our budget. So although the cuts are still painful, the fact that that growth in number will be taken care of makes them less painful.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay, so just so I understand this, do you think the cuts will affect your frontline staffing arrangements?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

At the moment, we are trying to come up with as many ideas as we can to make sure that is not the case and so far I am fairly confident that will be the case, but it is early days; we will need to go through that in some detail in the next few weeks. The point is, it is not just cuts, there is growth in the system as well. Overall there is a net loss, so if all our growth bids go through and all our cuts are made, we will end up with a cut of around about £4 million or so. The trick is making sure our growth bids stay intact otherwise that could be a problem.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Given that you said there was going to be an ebb and flow within the system and if you are saying that you are trying not to affect frontline staff, is there then going to be an increase in class sizes with this bulge coming through the system?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

We have stayed away from class sizes. As I say, it is quite difficult at the moment because we are just going through every single department, every single service, looking where we can make savings, and the rest of it, and we have not yet come to the point where we would want to raise class sizes. My view on that is that I think it will have an impact in some parts of the Island and less of an impact elsewhere, depending on the nature of the children. The problem we have got is even if we wanted to raise class size, which I would not want to do, some of our schools are built with a Jersey class size in mind, so some of our classrooms are not physically big enough. So that is not an idea we are pursuing at the moment. It is just too early in the system; I am not trying to be deliberately difficult, we just simply have not got there yet.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So you will keep us updated and brief us at the earliest?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. I will do that.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Did you want to come in?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Yes. Just can I ask on that point: so then within your budget, the Minister has not outlined any particular area that he would like to ring-fence or make sure is protected?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, we are looking to protect anything which allows us to pursue the 4 key objectives I have just gone through, particularly standards. So if we have to reduce services, we will not, for example, reduce the team that is involved in raising standards. In fact, as I mentioned, we are growing by 2 fulltime bodies. So we are looking to take efficiencies elsewhere. To be blunt, the department as it stands is already very efficient and very streamlined, it is not a department with a lot of fat on it because there have been cuts in the past which have made it, I think, quite an efficient and streamlined department, which is why, as the Minister says, it is going to be painful. What we are trying to do is balance up between the cuts we need to make but the growth that is coming our way and, between the 2, get a balanced position where those 4 priorities can be pursued and pursued with some sense of urgency. As I say, we are just so early into the system, it is a problem with timing.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I am just noticing a discrepancy there. So if you are saying your focus is on raising standards and the measurable standards come later, you have said that you are going to shift resources to early years. How will you balance those 2 priorities?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It depends what you describe as early years. If we are adopting the 1001 Days manifesto, which we have done, there is a taskforce being headed up by the Chief Minister, Senator Green, the Minister for Health and Social Services and myself, with the various departments working together focused on that, and that will be flushed out with monies from the 2 departments, or extra cash is what we are looking for at that point in time. So the concept of dealing with that that early separates itself from the problem that we have got. You are absolutely right in that the one thing that we do sit and discuss constantly is the protection of the frontline services, as you have described it, which is to make sure that the kids get the best teaching, wherever they come into the system.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So early years is a priority and it is not going to be put on the backburner to keep the focus on the standards and outcomes later on?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. The line we take is that early years is an important starting point to raising standards. As you say, it takes a while to come through, but we know absolutely we have to invest in early years. It was carefully worded, that slide, in that it says something like: "As opportunities arise." So we would not, for example, be saying to secondary schools: "We are going to chop your budget because need to"; as opportunities arise and inflation comes through and the rest of it, we would hold some budgets so that we can increase over a period of time the money going to early years. That is something which secondary schools have agreed, with a heavy heart, that makes sense, because they can see the impact that has. It is not just early years either, in terms of chronological age, it is early in terms of identifying problems rather than allowing them to develop and become more complicated.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay. Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Just a couple: you have said that Education will be exempt from the second round of cuts, but there is a first round. Are you ideologically signed up to that or do you accept that cuts at all are not conducive to the laudable aims that you have talked to us about today?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

If you are asking me would I prefer not to have cuts, I would prefer not to have cuts, but it seems to me that in our situation you cut your cloth according to your circumstance, and the circumstance is that, looking across the board, there is not any way out of this, there have to be cuts made. So the first thing that we do is sit down and work out, as we have already described: "What are we saying? How are we triaging this? What is the most important thing to us?" So I would love to turn round and say to you: "No, I do not particularly want cuts, but we do feel that there is an opportunity"; as the Director as already said, there is no fat in the system because we work so effectively we have been able to manage to find what we need to do during that period of time.

[10:45]

It is going to be uncomfortable, without a doubt, and it will have consequences.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But how does your position manifest itself when you are in discussions with the Council of Ministers and what sort of sympathy do you get from your colleagues who may look at your department knowing that they have got to make cuts in their own departments as well and will inevitably take the same position that they would rather no cuts if possible? So how does that manifest itself and how do your colleagues in the Council of Ministers deal with that knowing that Education has an exemption from the second round of cuts?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

That is a really good question because it was one of the first things that was discovered in the first meetings with the Council of Ministers when we first got into the room and began to have those kinds of discussions, and it was first put on the table very early on in the discussions that the aims of the manifestos of most of the individuals, the Senators who had gone for the Council of Ministers and who were in that Ministry, were supportive of protecting both Health and Education. So it was not that difficult a conversation. Then the question begs to be asked: "Well, how can we help them creatively to look across the table and say: 'Well, what can you do?'" So I think what you are hinting at is that there is an element of jealousy or there is an element of concern that people will be taking bigger hits; I think what they are trying to do is really work out what are the

priorities of this government. I think it has already been firmly established that Health and Education are the top of that priority list.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

So people who are sending their kids to school in Jersey can feel safe that they have got a Minister who is not one of these Ministers that we know do sometimes exist who do not really like the idea that the state provides such a large amount of services and would prefer things to be cut back, if at all possible? They can be confident that they have got a Minister who, at every single opportunity, is saying: "No, we cannot cut this, this has got to stay, and the savings we will make have to be mitigated as far as possible."

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Can I just ask very briefly about 2 subsequent things that come from that: one of the things that struck me from the presentation were I felt that you could look at the statistics for different schools and notice the St. Helier-based schools, or at least including Grainville in that because it takes a significant number of students from St. Helier, they did stand out in many ways in terms of number of students who did not have English as a first language, and a few other things as well. So to what extent are you looking at those schools, some of which we saw from there have less funding per student than some of the other schools? How does that feature in your overall view, bearing in mind that St. Helier is also another strategic priority for the Council of Ministers?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. The 11 to 16 schools are a priority for me for 2 reasons: firstly, they are schools that are easily criticised compared to the others because people just look at themselves, they do not look at the intake and the issues they are dealing with. Secondly, and far more importantly, that is where most of our vulnerable young people go. So if you look at where I spend my time, I spend a lot of my time with those 4 11 to 16 schools, but I think they do a great job. So it is a priority. Have we got it right yet? No, I do not think we have because, as I said, overall the system should be providing more young people with 5 A stars to Cs than is currently the case. Those 11 to 16 schools are a priority, we do need to work more closely with them. In terms of young people without English as a first language, I am not sure we have got it quite right yet, but we have put some really good support in. I will go back and look at the data, but I think we may withdraw some of that support a little early, so what we tend to do is find that these young people get a grasp of the language, they tend to work well, they make friends, they are part of the school community, you will see them in the school play and the rest, but what we need to do is keep the support going

until they have got such a good grasp of the language that they can engage in the nuances of the lesson. You tend to find some of these young people sit quietly because their English is not that good where people speak at the kind of speed we do and using the breadth of vocabulary they do not have. So we need to look at that, and that has an impact on their G.C.S.E. results. But it is a priority for us.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

One very last thing: we have spoken briefly before about where the savings can be made in terms of staffing. One area that is brought up election after election is the subsidy that is given to fee-paying schools. Some previous candidates for Minister for Education, Sport and Culture have said: "Definitely, that is to be looked at", some have said: "Definitely not" because it is politically a very difficult issue. What are your thoughts on that at the moment? Is it something you consider there is an area where savings can be made so less savings have to be made in other areas? Where do you sit on that?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think it is a priority, I think it is something we need to look at. We are always kind of scrabbling round to find out, as the Director has already identified, where to put the money, where the money is best placed, and everybody is observant of the system at the moment, the way it sits. Once again, I would repeat something I have often said: that if you had a blank sheet of paper and were trying to create a brand new education system, it would not look like the one we have got. So it is on the agenda but our first route has to be in terms of what we are doing here, and the focus has to be on those 4 priorities that we have got, so in the background we would be looking at fees, but at the moment our focus is on those 4.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

So you will not rule out reducing the subsidy to fee paying schools if you think it is conducive to creating a better education system?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, I will not be ruling that out.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Jeremy, did you have one more?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

No, thank you.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay. Right, well, it is over to you for question 2.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

You are handing back to me anyway. Okay, thank you very much. Just moving on to our next section. Minister, I wonder if you could tell us whether there are any propositions that are expected to be put to the States Assembly during 2015, just to make the panel aware of any of that work?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Currently, none.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Okay. Then are there any significant ministerial decisions which you are planning on making within that time?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Currently, no.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you very much. I just wondered on that point though, feeding back from some of the propositions that we did have recently, I wonder whether the department will be reflecting on the changes to the grants for university funding, how successful or otherwise that change has gone; and also the change to the music service and when that is due for a review, because I believe the way that has been funded and working also changed.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Okay, I will take them in reverse order. The music service is being looked at at the moment, it is going through a period of transition, but I can ask the Director to talk about that in a second. Then with regards to the grants for higher education, I have think you have got further down what is being done in relation to funding of higher education on and off the Island. I have got my colleague, Andy Gibbs, here who will talk about that. I do not know if you want to bring that in now or ...?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

We will wait for that later, then.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Okay. To go back, do you want to just briefly mention what we are doing with the music?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. The music service review has not been around the funding but it has been about the nature of the service. We have a service which has outgrown its role, in a sense, it has grown as a peripatetic music service rather than a music service in the more general term. So we have been consulting with staff to change the nature of the service so we get to more children, we have a greater focus on children with vulnerability, because music can be a really good route through which to gain confidence and self esteem. So all members of staff have got new job descriptions, we are going through that process at the moment, and that should all be in place certainly this side of Easter. Then in the summer all the staff will be going through a training exercise for what the new service will look like and the new service will be launched in September, and we will get information out about that. Basically, the idea is it will get to more young people than it currently does. At the moment, only 8 per cent of the children on the Island have access to the music service; we want to extend that to much higher numbers. It does not have a lot of influence over the music taught in schools, and it should do, so we are changing the nature of the service. But we have not reviewed the funding, as such, we have reorganised it within the existing funding arrangement.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay, anything else on that? No. Okay. Question 3 then: is our school starting age appropriate?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I am not sure whether I know what the background to this question is, I was a bit surprised to find it. But I think, if I am right to say (you can correct me here if I am wrong) that if you look across the board, across the education starting age for most schools, the U.K. in particular and ourselves included, we are in a minority. Most schools will either start at 6 or 7, particularly if you look at education in places like Finland where it is considered to be one of the highest things. I think where we have got it is just about right, but it is about the care and consideration between the transition from places like nursery to primary and understanding where we are coming from. It has not really been discussed before, but I think it is a good opportunity to bring it on to the table. Including things like 1001 Days and Early Years it is about wellbeing of the child, and my visits to, I think all the primary schools except a couple of the fee-paying, have given me great comfort in knowing that that is where they are entirely placed well. This is not about academic states at this

point in time. I think some of the primary schools we have here in Jersey are of an excellent quality, I think the heads and the staff are really focused on these children; they are nurturing their wellbeing. I have no hesitation in saying that, as much as I would like practically to consider moving the age I would not be considering that at this point in time. So the transition between nursery to primary is a good one. The other consideration is that in the past we started to close down some of the nurseries because we felt we were being competitive. Now, as a consideration, there is a balance for what we are looking forward to for the future (and lots of schools are asking for this) and that is to begin to bring back nurseries into the schools, primary schools in particular, because there is a good, solid transition then between nursery to primary.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I am pleased you brought up the nurseries because I want to ask about that, but I just want to pick up, you said you believe that the school starting age is just about right?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Can you tell me what evidence you have that supports that opinion for the school starting age being the best for academic achievement and for social and emotional reasons as well?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is the reverse, I do not have any evidence to say it is not, I suppose is the point. As I have been going around the schools, and the stuff that I have read and witnessed shows that when you are moving through a system ... and as the Director has already hinted at, we are very inclusive in what we do. This is formulating a very good society, a well-built society that looks after the citizenship of their children from a very early stage. So I think the considerations that would have happened in the past have been omitted now, so those kind of concerns that people would have had about transition, if that is what you are hinting at with regard to nursery to primary, do not exist. So I do not see any concerns myself, I have not had any.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So you said there is no evidence to say that it is not. So are you aware of any evidence from any other jurisdictions that a later age does give academic, social and emotional benefits?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Certainly if you look at those other countries, like Finland as an example or the Nordic countries, or even Korea and so on, there is a consideration from the evidence that I have seen and read (and I

will ask the Director to comment more because he is closer to the front line than I am) I think their systems are set up differently from ours, and that is the problem more than anything else.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So was that a yes or a no?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I have not seen too much evidence, going back to the point you are making, that a later stage would be better, I have not seen too much evidence to prove that.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Would you be open to considering evidence if we could present you with some?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I would look at anything, yes.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I wonder if the Director wanted to ...?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

I was about to say it is the wrong question; it is your question so it is not the wrong question. I do not think it is a case of whether the children start school at the right age or not, it is what we do when we get them there. So some of the evidence you are talking about I was involved in gathering some time ago when I worked for the National Institute of Economic and Social Research. We did some work in Hungary, for example, on behalf of Margaret Hodge and some of the others, and what we found is it is not really a case of how old the children are, it is what you do when you get them there. The problem is here in Jersey that we adopt and adapt, quite rightly, the U.K. curriculum for all the right reasons, but sometimes perhaps we need to a bit more adopting rather than too much adapting and, early years is something I think we need to look at. To be absolutely blunt with you, it is a case of capacity. What I do not want to do at the moment is get into a detailed review of early years curriculum because we have got so many other things to do, but it is something we will get around to doing. Just to give you my views on this, I think that if you have a child at the age 4 and a half or 5, what is most important is they learn to listen, to share, to play nicely, to communicate, to get across. What is less important is whether they can write a number 3 or a number 7 or form their As, Bs and Cs. That will come. You mentioned the Nordic systems, what they are really good at is getting children to the age of 7, when they have good enough social skills that they acquire the academic skills much more quickly. I have mentioned it before: if you go into some of our European countries children do not reverse their 3s and 7s and

5s; they do here and we worry about it. That is because they are not taught to write 3s, 5s and 7s until they need to. If you go elsewhere in Europe they will not know what a pencil grip is and that is because they do not put a pencil in the hands of little fingers until those fingers are strong enough and developed enough to be able to use a pencil. So sometimes we jump ahead of ourselves, for all the right reasons, so I think a review of what we do with these young children when we get them is long overdue.

[11:00]

But is going to be a year or so before we get to it because we have so much else to do. So my plan at the moment is simply to adopt and implement what we have in place and do it as well as we possibly can. I do not think we need to go elsewhere, use the expertise we have on the Island to review what we do with these young children when we have them. So the right age; I just think we need to review what we do with them.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Just to follow on from what the Director is saying there, it is amplified from me what these nursery/primary schools represent, that they do represent nurturing, loving, caring societies that the children can grown in. There were 3 quotes that struck me going around from 3 different heads in 3 different primaries: one said that children are not the centre of the family anymore, and that is a paradigm shift. The other said that parents do not want to be parents anymore, they want to be mates, another paradigm shift. Again, it is that shift away from the focus of the child. The last, that gave me great comfort, was the head of one of the schools that turned around and said: "Rod, it's all about the kiddies." It is that concept and it is looking through that lens that really I am focused on.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay, just a couple more things there. So you talked about the transition from early years into school. Do you think that we start formal teaching, formal learning at the right age in Jersey or do you think, as I think Justin was hinting at with his possible review into Early Years, that we need to maybe push that back, so keep the things that we have got but just push the formal learning back a little later?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. I think the Director is right about that and, in looking at your questions, I did contact a couple of heads just to see what their feelings were about it, and I was surprised because their feelings were slightly different from myself and the Director in that sort of context. They felt that it was coming at the right time, they thought the transitions that we put in place from primary to

secondary were working, the sort of 2 days in the schools and what happened. I think in the past what has happened is that people always felt if you take a child from a primary school into a secondary school, in particular ...

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Sorry, I was talking about from nursery to primary.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Nursery to primary, okay. I mean, any of those transitions I think would give us a concern because it is a bitter pill for any child to move from a secure position to a less secure position and each time you step there is another big step to be taken. So from nursery to primary, yes, I think we have got it right but I think the Director is right as well, we could get it better.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So given that Justin, your Director has such a good understanding of Early Years and the issues around that and what is really needed, and in his words we do need to review Early Years but we have so many other things to do, will you undertake to maybe push that forward as a bit more of a priority, given that the Council of Ministers have committed to the 1001 Days manifesto?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think it is on the agenda and knowing your background I am quite sure that you would like me to do that as quickly as possible. It is on the agenda.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Just to touch on that period, because it is something which has been highlighted, I wonder if you can just explain what evidence the department has around what I think you are alluding to which is the distress, discomfort, that the transition from either nursery to primary or primary to secondary is causing the students? I would just be very interested to learn how that is affecting students and the number of students it affects because it is something which the department has highlighted.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I am sure the Director will fill in the detail, but if you consider each aspect, each step of that, what you are moving from is that security each time. So as a good example if you take the issue of moving away from nursery to primary, or primary to secondary, that is a big leap for children at that point in time. In particular, what concerns me is the information relating to parents because parents feel that they have got a better connection with teachers in primary schools than they possibly do have with secondary schools, so they are far more supportive, they are far more understanding of that system, and then they make that transition to something which is more

focused on education. I think the point was always in the past that there was simply a handing over and it is almost like secondary teachers would say: "Okay, that is a clean sheet, now we start with a brand new child, provided we are given a good raw material." I think that sort of notion has disappeared now and there is much more continuity, much more understanding. Those are the things the Director has been talking about which is the understanding and the information, the data that we would provide, gives us a much better handling of that situation.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

I know physically it might not be possible, but I look forward to the day when all of our primary schools has a nursery, because you would be surprised how little evidence in terms of research there is on this. The research available tends to be American rather than European, which I am always a little suspect of, and I do not know why, I just am. But I would say a few things: if a nursery is attached to a primary school I think that transition is a lot easier, for all sorts of obvious reasons: because it is the same building, the same staff, the same entrance and the rest of it. Secondly, having a nursery in a primary school brings to that primary school some skills and experience which is not available if they do not have a nursery; it changes the nature. That is the first thing. The second thing I would say is one of the things to get right is to get parents understanding because very often children are nervous about moving because their parents are nervous about moving, and it is a self-inflicted wound. You can see them at the gates you know: "Are you sure you are okay?" Absolutely. The kid is fine until you start. So some of that parental anxiety is sometimes put across children and I think that is an issue. The first thing I would say is kids are far more resilient that sometimes we give them credit for. Of course they are going to be nervous and difficult, but as soon as they start playing and running around they are fine. If we are not careful we can overplay this card, but I think the best way to get the transition right is to have nurseries located at schools, get parents involved from day 1 and not to transfer our anxieties on to our children.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Is this what you meant, Minister, on Tuesday? I was listening to what you were saying. You said not restricting the school nurseries and you were going to open them up. Is that ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

That is what I was referring to, yes.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

You want to open more nurseries?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I would like to see more, yes. We have been very much in discovery mode in terms of the early months of this, even though previously I was an Assistant Minister. Going around the schools and talking to the heads is very much a priority they would like to do, for the very reasons the Director has outlined.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Is the primary reason driving this for the information services that the school will have about the child over the process or is it on that emotional and social wellbeing, about reducing anxiety? What is the primary reason?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

The primary thing is the second point you make: it is about the wellbeing of the child.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Just one more thing until I ask Sam if he wants to ask anything. In your strategic priorities (I know we have touched on this briefly but I just wanted to confirm it) can you just tell me, do you stand by this statement that you want to ensure every child is school ready and, if so, what do you mean by that?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think we had a private discussion about this where I said it was about semantics, and I know the Director and I slightly disagree on this point. I think it is about 2 things: one is providing that the child moves in the correct way from primary to secondary or from nursery even to primary. That is about being able to support the child emotionally. It has already been discussed and the Director has just outlined that we have got to make sure that the child has those social abilities when they move from one place to another, whether it is from nursery to primary or primary to secondary, depending upon what level they are at that point in time. Equally, it works the reverse way. The schools need to be ready for those children, and I think there has been too much observance in the past of almost like these stepped marks, and it has not been this continuous thing. So school ready, and I take on board what you said previously, I think is making sure that the emotional wellbeing of the child is considered at each point so that they have got support and they have got continuity, which goes back to the very point we were just making about making sure there are nurseries in schools where applicable, if possible. Then the heads of those primary schools can see the transitions that are being made and they could advise it. Equally, the sort of information

that is being transferred is really important so that the secondary schools in particular will look at that stuff that has been compiled from nursery all the way through, if possible, and have much better information to work with.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

When you say “school ready” you do not just mean ready for nursery and reception, you mean ready for secondary school as well?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay. So, just to sum up and confirm, when you say school ready you do not mean a kind of academic list of boxes that a child should tick?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is about being emotionally ready and about the child’s wellbeing, social and emotional?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Again, going back to what you just said about nurseries, if you take a child from a nursery to a primary that ability to be separated from the parent is really of core concern. Whenever we talk about this it is going to be about the wellbeing of the child.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. That answers my question.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Can I just add: we need to get to the point where kids cannot wait to get to the big school; they are really excited about it, not worried about it. That is the objective, and most are; most cannot wait to move on.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

They will be excited when the schools are ready and appropriate for the children rather than the other way round.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I will stop talking now and, Sam, did you want to ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I was going to say I remember how excited I was when I first...

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

If we are not careful we will make this an issue and it is a really exciting point in children's lives.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Most children are excited.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I was happy to move because I hated my primary school.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is keeping that excitement. It is not squashing that excitement out of them as they go through the system. It is keeping that.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Talking to the primary head, who you would know, from Grouville, she said to me there is not a child that comes back from the 2 days where they are in that discovery mode going into the next school and says they are not excited about it. Nobody ever complains about it.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

On the subject of when is the right time for a child to start primary school, what leeway is there for children who are born towards the very end of the academic year who could end up in a class where there is almost a year difference between those who are the oldest there and those who are the youngest, bearing in mind that at that stage of a child's development a year is a very long time? Is there any leeway there so perhaps kids could be held back a year if it was felt they were quite a young person for their age, if they are born on 31 August, and it would be wrong to put them with kids who were just a few days short of a year older than them, potentially?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, a summer child. There is leeway. There is the ability to appeal to myself as the Minister but I would always do that in consideration with the director and, in fact, we have spoken about that, I am sure he is scribbling notes down as we speak.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

My advice depends. There is always a child that is going to be the youngest in the class. That is just a statement of fact. I think on the whole it is a mistake to hold children back a year and we can have had long discussions about it. First of all, there is the legal position where it is a requirement by law to go in the term that you become 5. The difficulty is when you get to the other end at 16. There are cases of kids who have started a year older and they can leave school legally before sitting their GCSEs. You think: "Well, okay, that is unlikely," but it does happen and that is a problem. The other thing is I think people who worry about this, and it is usually the parents who understandably worry about it, underestimate the fact that schools are aware of the issue and can plan for it and will make a difference. I always say to parents: "Go and sit down and talk to the head teacher. Go and talk to the class teacher so that you are much more confident then about the fact that schools understand the issue." My advice always is get into the right year group, move forward and just make sure those needs are met. We have on the Island very few children out of their chronological age, I think 8 or 9, something of that kind, and I think all of them, without exception, are for medical reasons. They are children who have missed school because they have been ill or have had some kind of difficulty.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

That was going to be my supplementary question. Are there any children who are in that position at the moment?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

There are a very small number.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, a very small number and it is mostly for medical stuff you say?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, fair enough. This may be pushing the boundaries of what comes under this actual question but you have just reminded me of this issue. I know that the previous Government in the U.K. had talked about extending the age at which you must be in education, from 16 to 18. Is that something that has ever been considered? Obviously, it would place demands on the department in terms of creating extra school places for people who are leaving at 16, but is that something that has been considered?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

I do not know. It is less of an issue here than the U.K. because our stay-on rates here are so high; they are the kind of stay-on rates that the U.K. will dream of. When I talk about education indicators, the number of young people at the ages of 16 and 18 not in education, employment or training are tiny compared to the U.K. I think our figure is twice as good as the very best local authority in the U.K. It is partly to do with the size of the Island, so we know where these young people are, and it is partly to do with the inclusive nature of the Island. I have never worked anywhere where the instinct for being inclusive has been better than here. It is a real strength, what Jersey does. So the need to raise the participation age is probably not quite here. It is something I would not object to. It is something I would certainly be supportive of. We need to bear in mind that it is the participation age that is raised, not the legal age at which you can leave education. You can be in employment, for example, in the U.K. at the age of 17 or 18, as long as there is learning attached to it. So it is the participation age that is raised, not the school leaving age. As I say, it is not quite the same problem here. This was brought in by law in the U.K. to deal with about two-thirds of its local authorities where the leak rates, the number of people not in education, were very high. There are places in the U.K. where this is not an issue and if we were in part of the U.K. proper we would be in one of those areas, so it is not a big issue for me.

[11:15]

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Let us move on to question 4, Jeremy.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you. I wonder if we could perhaps just go into a bit more detail about how the progress of individual children will be monitored.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think the Director has highlighted it through that briefing that you had previously, but it is just really prior to that we had the system of professional partners, which has worked extremely well,

particularly in the primary schools, and now we are adopting a better monitoring system, which was described in that briefing. Do you want to explain that?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. The data systems that the schools are using I think are very impressive, but they have not been in schools for very long. Jersey is unusual in that it is the primary sector that is leading the way. Elsewhere, the use of data to monitor the progress of children is led by secondary schools, but here in Jersey the primary schools have been doing this for the last 3 years, and you can see the impact already on their results, which are upward and consistently so. What we want to do is build on that. All but 2 or 3 of our schools have the same monitoring system, which tracks individual children but it allows the head teacher to sit down and look at classes and how they are developing. One thing we could do, if you want, is organise for Scrutiny to spend an hour or so as a Scrutiny committee in one of our schools and show you the tracking systems that we are introducing because it is one of the most important things we are going to do. If you are going to raise standards and if you are going to teach better and if you are going to teach more clearly, you have to understand the children's level of learning. That is why it is such an important question. The monitoring system is absolutely crucial to what we are trying to do. If you would like, we could organise for you to go into a school and see it being used.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Just for clarity, does that mean there are different systems operating at the moment and you are looking for a standardised approach?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

First of all there were not many systems in place and the systems that were in place varied significantly. Before I came, over the last 2 to 3 years, a standard approach has been adopted by all but a few schools and those schools are looking to come on board, so we will have a single approach across the Island. What we will then do is procure a system at the centre that lists data from the systems that schools have already got. What we do not want to do is tell schools: "I am sorry; we are going to take all those systems out and put new systems in." It is not just a case of the I.T., it is a case of knowing how to use it in the classroom. You will get a mixed message at the moment. Some teachers will say: "I do not like it. I do not know how it works." Other teachers will say: "I am a fan." We are partway through a transitional period. I do not want to upset that. We are talking to companies at the moment that can use the systems we already have in place in schools so that we at the centre can draw that data out and then the schools can have access to it. If you are a teacher in, say, Trinity School, not only will you be able to look at how your children are doing compared to the children above and below you, but you will be able to look at how they are doing compared to other children across the Island as a whole and you will be able to say:

“Well, that school is very similar to ours. How are the children in my year group doing there? I should be doing better,” and go and visit that teacher to find out what they are doing. So we will have an open system where people can track the progress of children individually, in classes, in year groups, in schools and cohorts across the Island, and then we can start to have a conversation about the nature of the curriculum and how we should be teaching and why. I think the best thing is to see it in action. We have a long way to go yet. We are still behind the U.K.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Just to expand on what the Director said a little bit: behind this was always the change with regard to the technology. He is right to say it is not everything, but when we came out with the digital strategy it was about providing enough network, enough space, enough capacity in these schools, which we have now done, and the adoption of some of these tablets where the teacher in the classroom can make those sort of modifications or add to that rich data stream that we were not doing previously.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Yes. Two questions, which are short ones. When then is this programme expected to be delivered across the board?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

2016; it will take that time to get it in.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

2016; thank you. Regarding the budget for this programme, you did just mention how some of the teachers might be uncomfortable with this. Can you just tell us whether a training budget has been factored into this programme?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

It has.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

That is what I was going to ask.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Then another supplementary is on the system. The impact of these monitoring systems on teachers' work flows: how is that going to be monitored?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

The rhetoric is and the theory is and my view is this should reduce the workload of teachers, but time will tell. At the moment the monitoring systems we have in place do not reduce the workload because we have 2 separate systems. For a teacher working in the classroom, if they have not had the training they need and do not have the technology they need, they are writing stuff down and then when they get home they are putting it into the system. They have to have the I.T. kit so that they are doing it with the children, so they do not have to go home and do it again. Worse than that at the moment, to be fair, once they have done that somebody in the school, and often it is the head or the deputy head, has to then transfer the whole lot into Semis because we have a different system. So it could be that the work is being handled 3 times. The system that we are aiming to have in place for September 2016 all up and running (it will be in before then but running smoothly) will mean that as the teachers are working in the classroom they will be assessing children just the once. It will go into the school system, into the state system, once only. They can go back in and change it if they want. Yes, it should reduce the workload of teachers but in the first instance I think there is a hump to get over to get it into place.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Can I also say that we have done this in full observance of the unions, so they are fully aware of all of these transitions and stuff that we do.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Can I just come in there? You said this should reduce teacher workloads, and I can imagine it will for a teacher who is perhaps I.T. savvy, maybe a bit younger, but can you comprehend that there will be significant numbers of teachers that will really struggle with the I.T. side of this? To prevent their workload becoming excessive, will you commit to giving them the time within their paid hours of work at school to become au fait with these new technologies?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

But it is ever so simple, the technology.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

That is easy for someone to say who understands it.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Three or 4 years ago it might be difficult, but it is Janet and John Book 1 that the system, when you use it, is intuitive. You do not have to be an I.T. specialist to use the system. That was not true some years ago, but now it is, it is uncomplicated. Those people who are reluctant to use the system, once they have used it they are up and running in minutes, not days or hours. It is a very simple system.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

We will look forward to seeing it in the school.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, come and see it.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I do want to push on. Hypothetically, if there is a group of teachers who do not take to it immediately, will you ensure that they are supported and given the time?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

We will make sure they do. I think there is a bit of a false debate. I have lots of conversations with teaches and teachers' groups about the workload of planning lessons and assessment arrangements. In my view, and I think I have used this phrase before, it is a bit like a pilot saying: "I only fly. I do not take off and I do not land." You cannot teach a lesson well unless it is properly planned. You cannot teach the next lesson until you have assessed the outcomes of the last one. So planning lessons and assessing the outcomes of children is called teaching. It is part of it and I think that if teachers are struggling with the I.T. we have to help them overcome that but, frankly, they have got to do it. It is what we pay them to do. We pay them to plan lessons, to teach lessons well and to assess children's progress and they alter what they teach next and how they teach it based on what they have just assessed. What we are doing here is introducing a system that will help them do that quickly and effectively. What it does not do is remove professional instinct. The drawback on this, the concern about this, is if you go into schools in the U.K. (we do not have any here yet) that really have got this nailed, when you talk to some of the teachers and ask them: "Give me a view how the children are doing" they will go to their system and look for evidence rather than give you a professional view. We have got to get the balance right here in Jersey between a really good system which accurately tracks children's progress but does not drive out teachers' professional instinct and gut reaction.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

But if you are taking away the teachers' autonomy in the methods that they use to plan, teach and assess, so you are effectively imposing these monitoring methods on them, then, yes, it is the teacher's responsibility to do these things. But if they have a preferred method which they are used to and works for them and they can do within their paid hours and they are happy doing that, if the department are saying to them: "We want you to do it this way" then do you agree that it is the department's responsibility to train that teacher within their working hours and not expect them to do it in excess?

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, and we will do that, but where I disagree with you a bit is we have teachers using systems which work for them but it does not work for the kids, and I think it is important that it works for the kids and we work back from that. But, yes, the staff will be provided training and support and ongoing support to make sure that as these systems come in they are not expected to work late at night figuring out how to use the system. What I am saying to you is that I am not an I.T. expert and I can use it. I used it myself as a bit of a test.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

We will have a look. When we go and have our visit I will have a look at that.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Come and have a look. Yes, have a go.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

We are very close to finishing and I know Sam wanted to ask question 5.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Unfortunately it is a big one. What is being done in relation to funding of higher education on and off-Island?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

A very brief answer, please, as we are running out of time.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I am not sure I can give you a very brief answer but I will attempt to do it. We understand the situation: we understand the pressures that students are under, we understand the pain that parents are feeling, particularly because of the cost of all of this education. I think there was a consideration, I heard recently, in the U.K. come the elections that, should Labour get in, we shall

see a reduction in these fees to something like £6,000. But there are a few things that we do at the moment and I am going to pass over to Mr. Gibbs in a second to sort of highlight these. One thing we have done subsequently that may or may not be known is that we have gone into discussions with Community Savings Bank to see if we can alleviate pressure on students with some sort of minor loans. These are the maintenance loans. These are not the substantial loans that you would get in the U.K. where the whole thing is taken on board. We know that in the U.K. most students now have a debt of around £45,000. We know that the debt in total for the U.K. is £45 billion. We know that only 70 pence in every pound is ever recovered. We know that debt is rising and we know that debt is almost never going to be recovered, so it is an amazing amount of money to be found by the taxpayer. In fact, if you look at it, the students get hit twice. Not only do they have to have that debt on their back for a substantial amount of time, they are, equally, when they go into paid work, paying taxes as well. So they are paying for that debt as well. Again, it is like a double whammy. Do you want to just pick up on that?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Very briefly, just a quick thing following from that, can I infer from that answer that you do not like the consequences of what a loan system would mean for students in terms of the potentially huge amount of debt they could be incurring from that and what wider impact that has on them socially once they are out of university and in terms of their income and how much they are having to put aside rather than spending it on beginning their lives?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

You can take that, yes.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Did you want to ask your other question of the Minister before we run out of time?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

No, I am fine to hear from Mr. Gibbs.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Yes. We have 3 minutes, I think.

Head of Lifelong Learning and Skills, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, just to put in a bit more detail, as the Minister said. What we are doing about higher education funding is on 3 fronts really. One is that we need to find out exactly what the situation is in the U.K. We are on the receiving end of decisions that are made elsewhere, which is one of the problems around tuition fees, and the Minister's point about even if the government changes and

fees go down to £6,000, it is unlikely to have a similar impact on our fees simply because they will replace that reduction in student payment by a government payment. Consequently, the fees for our students are likely to be at roughly the same level. We had a meeting 2 weeks ago; we met and worked with Isle of Man and Guernsey as well on this, because we are all obviously subject to the same fee levels, to find out exactly what is going to happen. The second thing, again as the Minister says, is we are looking at different ways of perhaps providing funding and that is this discussion with Community Savings Bank, and it is important we involve Treasury in that as well. The third thing we do is that we do annually look at our grant system, the system of funding, and try and see if there are anomalies which have grown up. It is a very fluctuating world and, therefore, we do try and put something in each year to try and correct those anomalies. The Deputy referred to, I think a proposition which came previously around household income, which I think was the last time I was at Scrutiny. That has gone through fairly painlessly. It has created very few problems. In fact, we were anticipating a lot of appeals. We have not had a lot of appeals on that, so it has been a fairly smooth transition. We have also brought in, in this year, changes to the way that we look at postgraduates. We have made that more accessible. We have changed the way we look at distance learning again to fund different courses. All the time we are looking at the system and we are trying to make it ... The bottom line is, yes, it is a grant system. We try and ensure that people who should get the money do get the money but, at the end of the day, it is about supporting students to develop and move on. That is really what we are about.

[11:30]

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you very much. We will have to stop there. It is time. Can I just say thank you to the Minister and his team; I think you have been very open and forthcoming with your answers. It has been a productive hearing and we are looking forward to visiting the schools to see your new monitoring system. You said something about a group that was redrafting the curriculum. Could we ask that we are updated on that when you make progress with that?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Were there any other commitments that we need?

Scrutiny Officer:

You spoke about a briefing in relation to the savings.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, once we have got more information.

Scrutiny Officer:

The only thing I have got is if we could have a copy of the presentation.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, not a problem.

Director, Department of Education, Sport and Culture:

Shall I email it to you?

Scrutiny Officer:

To me, yes, please.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Minister, is there anything else you wanted to add or clarify for us before we finish?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, not at all. I would just simply say if there are any other things that crop up in your minds or if there are questions that we have not answered that you want us to, our door is open. You can come and talk to us any time you like. Equally, if there is anything else you would like to see within the schools, please ask us for that and we will accommodate your wishes.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Brilliant, thank you. I will thank you both again for the openness and the positive and productive relationship that we discussed.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Thank you.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you, everybody.

[11:31]