



Education and Home Affairs Panel

Quarterly Hearing with the Minister for Education

Witness: The Minister for Education

Friday, 1st March 2019

Panel:

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier (Chairman)

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John

Deputy R.E. Huelin of St. Peter

Witnesses:

Senator T.A. Vallois (The Minister for Education)

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour (The Assistant Minister for Education)

[10:30]

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier (Chairman):

Welcome to the quarterly hearing for the Minister for Education and the Assistant Minister for Education. We should introduce ourselves for the cameras and the people present. I am Deputy Robert Ward and I chair the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John:

I am Deputy Trevor Pointon of St. John and I am a Member of the Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy R.E. Huelin of St. Peter:

I am the Deputy of St. Peter and I am on the panel.

The Minister for Education:

Senator Tracey Vallois, the Minister for Education.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Good morning everyone. Deputy Jeremy Maçon, Assistant Minister for Education with delegate responsibilities for skills and higher education.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Excellent. Thank you very much. So if we start off with some general questions, and we can start by asking what your top 5 strategic priorities are in education.

The Minister for Education:

Okay. I think I have been fairly consistent with this since I came in as Minister for Education. One of them is clearly the early years' Policy Development Board, which is looking at conception to 5 years. One of the vital areas within that of course is the Nursery Education Fund. We know last term we had a few issues around the funding position on that, and of course there is an overspending on that so we need to resolve that particular issue. The legislation of the Education (Jersey) Law and Day Care of Children (Jersey) Law we are looking to fundamentally look into all of the areas of the Education (Jersey) Law. My view is even though it is 20 years old it is written prior to that, and I think education has moved on to such an extreme now, and is probably going to look extremely different in the next 20 years, so really from my point of view it is setting the right foundations for that next 20 years and looking long-term for education, rather than just this term. So the Education (Jersey) Law is quite a huge piece of work but all the other pieces of work that we will be doing will feed into that, so we are not looking for that to come to the Assembly until 2021, because we want to make sure that we try to get it as right as we can first time. So the review of higher education is the other one. Of course the higher education funding was a requirement from the States Assembly for us to review again because of the interim position of the current funding model. Of course this is Deputy Maçon's area and so we are looking into that and our Director for Young People, Further Education, Skills and Learning is currently working on a tertiary strategy at the moment to help inform that new model, and also school funding, which is of course a huge piece of work and an extremely important piece of work, because in order for us to provide the best education for all of our students we need to have the right resources and the right support within our education system to do so. Like I stated on the Education (Jersey) Law side of things, education has moved on. Children are experiencing more mental health issues or special educational needs and so we need to recognise that within our formula funding and also how we support those children going through the education system.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

The changes to the Education (Jersey) Law, what sort of consultation will you be taking with the profession itself?

The Minister for Education:

It will be a consultation with everybody. I think it is really important. We have got an opportunity now as well because of the Children's Plan and of course the focus on the children's voice, we need to hear from children themselves, but I think it is important that we have consultation with everyone. That is why I am saying it will not come until 2021. There will be a lot of work that feeds into that, such as the N.E.F. (Nursery Education Fund). There will be the early years' side of things and how the starting age works and also the further higher education, whether we move it, like the U.K. (United Kingdom) up to 18. There is a lot of work in there to do and also the language within the law does not really meet, in my view, with modern-day standards.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It is a bit outdated, yes. What headline achievements have you had so far in the past 8 or 9 months?

The Minister for Education:

It has been a pretty tricky first few months. I would have liked to have achieved a lot more and I am not known to be a particularly patient person. However, because of a lot of things going on in the public sector at the moment and of course the public sector pay situation officers are being stretched to the limit in terms of what they can and cannot do, so the early years stuff, as much as I would have liked to have seen something produced as a first phase by now, what we need is the proper resource and support for that development board. I am looking holistically at early years, not just a specific point. I would like to sit here and say we are well on the way and we are getting very far, but it is a lot of work to do and because of the changes in the public sector and the pay situation our officers are stretched and so we are trying to get all this work done in between everything else in terms of the day job, so it is causing some friction and tension at the moment.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

All I would add is not to paint a totally bleak picture. For example, we have introduced a new higher education funding model. We know from the statistics that has allowed many more students to be able to attain higher education and go on those courses. We have also had the social work degree. I was up at Highlands College yesterday speaking to the manager of that course. It is going to start in September with Sussex University. They are inundated with applications and they have got a good spread between male and female applicants. In fact what they are saying is they might have to tell some of the applicants to enrol in next year's course, just because they have got that many people applying, so that is really good news, I think, for the Island.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

What was that course, sorry?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

The social work degree course, and of course certainly in line with the Minister's policies we have been working with a very motivated young member of the public in tackling bullying and putting on much more anti-bullying training within the schools, so I do not want to paint a totally bleak picture, but there are things going on in the background that have been achieved in that period.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

There was a report today about pupil premium funding being agreed for this year at last. Sometimes there are delays in that getting into schools, because schools work from September until July and our financial year is January so we are very aware of those issues. Can we have some assurance that that funding will get in there as quickly as possible and that it is agreed? Has that been agreed?

The Minister for Education:

The pupil premium funding as far as I am concerned will continue. From my point of view it is quite easy for officers to provide data in terms of maybe a one-year, this is what the Jersey Premium has done, but if you want proper outcomes for children you cannot see the effects of that Jersey Premium until 13 years, so their full school life, in terms of the support that it has provided. I think it would be extremely premature and silly for us to drop it. What we need to ensure is that at the very least we have the base funding that we have got at the moment that has been putting cash limits from the M.T.F.P. (Medium Term Financial Plan) addition and obviously with the school funding side of things and looking at all the areas of school funding ensuring that we have the right resource in place for the Jersey Premium as well, because this is all about providing the right support for the children.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So that money is in schools now?

The Minister for Education:

Yes.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Just to reassure our schools as much as anything.

The Minister for Education:

They will definitely have the 2019 and, like you say, we do have an issue with regards to the academic year versus the financial year, and this is something that I raised under ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It has always been there, yes.

The Minister for Education:

... what will be the new Public Finances (Jersey) Law, because of course that will be coming soon from the Minister for Treasury and Resources.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

It is being analysed, though, is it not, the pupil premium, just so that we can get some type of feedback and analysis about how it is being used?

The Minister for Education:

It gets analysed every year, but it has only been in place for 2 years.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I understand long-term. It links into this holistic approach to education, which is a huge project. Can you give any ideas of how you are going to promote this change? I think we will come to some questions about it later anyway, so the less narrow approach, but the more open approach. I suppose the simple thing to say is that we have gone very much down the U.K. model but there are other models out there that are equally much more successful but they really do take a leap of faith. What can you do to promote that, depending on how difficult that is, when you talk about the holistic approach?

The Minister for Education:

From my point of view we are in an extremely possible position to do these things, so long as you have got a ministerial team and States Members around you that are willing to utilise the law that we have at the moment. There is an opportunity to change that further but we do not have to follow the U.K. and that is the point that I want to make. The Education (Jersey) Law states we have our own Curriculum Council, the Education Department works closely with the unions and head teachers and senior leadership teams, so it is very different to the U.K. I think the way people see us using the U.K. model is because we adopt a similar curriculum and we use their examining boards and those types of things, but if we are determined I believe anything is possible, it is just how much effort and work you can put in to make sure that that is possible. Like I say, for me, this term, is laying the right groundwork for that, but you have got to take people with you.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I think it is always important, Minister, to give you the opportunity to go up to 30,000 feet and give us your vision for education and summarise that. You have always got to have something you are dreaming about, because you cannot get the reality unless you have done that so share with us your vision, please.

The Minister for Education:

My vision? We all know that with the onset of technology and the changes in the world, mental health and also the economy is changing and it is changing at a dramatic rate, especially with technology in place. I very much believe in the next 20 years we are going to see a very different world. We have to take into account we have got an ageing population as well, so we are going to have a reduced working population and we need to support students to have the types of skills where it is not just about one career anymore. There are going to be all types of jobs that need to be done, but how they are done is the key question. So it is providing our students, our children, with a future where they have the skills to analytically, critically think, and apply innovative solutions to things. We need to be able to produce an education system that supports that type of 20-year thinking and ensure that our children cannot just aspire but become that potential that they want to be. That is not about us telling them where they should or should not go. That is about them being able to make the absolute best of themselves. That is my big vision and, like I say, I am looking 20 years ahead.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

What I quite like about that is that we have to be independent of the U.K. model if we are going to ensure that we are educating to meet the needs of our small Island so that links in very nicely. Is that a fair observation?

The Minister for Education:

I think it is an absolutely fair observation. It is like the Chairman stated, there are other education systems around the world that are doing much better than the U.K. and I think what we have got the opportunity to do, as a small Island, is take some of the really good parts of all of those different pieces of education and create something. What I would love is for people to turn around and say: "Why can we not be like Jersey?" instead of us turning around and saying: "Well, why can we not do that?" I would like people around the world going: "Well, they have got this model and it is really working" but the problem is that people are so fixed on the short-term and what happens at the end of each year. Education will take 20 years to prove those outcomes, and those are some of the issues that we have got.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

How do you envisage the really difficult task of breaking that cycle?

The Minister for Education:

Like I say, for me, this term, because I may not be here next term, it is very much about setting the foundation right. That is talking with people, and taking people with you. You cannot change a system like this. An educational system is extremely personal and sensitive to every single person. Parents want the right thing for their children and sometimes parents think in a very different way to what their children do, so we have got to try to get the child's voice involved in this process. They see the world very differently to what we do. We were brought up in a different time. I know I am pretty young but even in that many years it has changed, and that is what I mean by the advancement of the economy and the world that we are living in now. We need to prepare them for that.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Do you think that we have been guilty in Jersey, like the U.K., of using a too narrow indicator of success and missing the other successes around the fringes, therefore isolating a lot of our children out of the opportunity for that success?

The Minister for Education:

I definitely think so, because it is not just about a grade and it is not just about a number. It is not just about data or a statistic. This is people. These are human beings at the centre of this, and if they do not have the emotional intelligence, they do not have those skills that they can apply critically or analytically or innovatively to things, this is very much something that I will let Jeremy speak on this particular part, but I had a conversation with some employers the other day around there is this view, some employers, they just see the number or the letter, whatever it is these days in terms of the grades that we have and degrees and all those types of things and then they take these people on because they think they are right for their employment, but sometimes they do not have the skill set that the employer needs.

[10:45]

That is not the skill set in terms of the academic but it is the commonsense side of the need, the skills, the emotional intelligence and those types of things. There is a broader thing here and this is why I want to lead on to Deputy Maçon to give his view, because this then falls into how do we then look at further higher education, how do we look at lifelong learning, career changes, job opportunities, different types of qualifications that enable people to prove their abilities and support the economy overall but also themselves, because it is that mental health issue as well?

The Deputy of St. John:

What you are suggesting is a huge step-change for society. It is entirely understandable for people who have a strong connection with education, but for society to stop insisting that their little Johnny or little Sally achieve 5 or 10 O-Levels and that is the objective in life, they are going to need to alter their view and understanding.

The Minister for Education:

It is not necessarily stopping. For example when we talk about all the good education practices around the world, it is how you get there.

The Deputy of St. John:

I did not mean that we were going to move away from examination, but that there is something more, the holistic side of things.

The Minister for Education:

Yes, there is. The problem is that we have got very archaic thinking in terms of we need to teach children up to a certain age and ensure that they take that test at a certain age, but not all children or adults are ready to take a test at a certain age. This is what we have got to understand and create the flexibility in that higher level education, in that further secondary, further higher education model. What we have got to look at is instead of saying at 16: "You have to do these GCSEs and you have to get this many grades" it is saying: "Are you ready to take those GCSEs at that age?"

The Deputy of St. John:

I think the point I was trying to make was that if you are going to progress along this line in which you are expecting the community to understand what is a totally new approach really and that life is not going to end at 16, learning is going to go on and you may not achieve your GCSEs at 16 but you may achieve them at 20 or 22, what do we need to do to bring society into that frame of mind? How do we need to publicise that and what do we need to do to bring society on board?

The Minister for Education:

It is an interesting question, because some areas you are going to need certain qualifications for certain things, if you are looking internationally or globally. Like I say you are looking at taking other educational best practice and saying to yourself: "Well, how do you take the people with you to ensure that we have that change?" It is ultimately a culture change and that takes a long time to achieve, but what they want to see is their child coming out or our children coming out the other end happy, able, capable and resilient. I think that is a really important point, resilient, to be able to take on some of the challenges and changes that are going to happen in the world. The world is a very

different place to what it was in the 1970s and the 1980s when all this type of new education models were changing. We have got to change with the times.

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, of course, so what do you see around the world as being educational best practice?

The Minister for Education:

There are some really good areas. We have got the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, all those areas that have some really good offerings. You have got vocational training in Germany, which is fantastic. They have got a really good vocational offering in Germany, but also you look at New Zealand who are much further ahead than everyone else, to be fair. They have got a 40-year plan about how their country is going to move forward and that is filled in with not just public finances but their education. They are moving in leaps and bounds within that. Canada is another example as well. So there are plenty of countries where there are areas that we can say: "What does this look like? What does this mean and how does it fit for Jersey and what kind of model can we have?" It is not as scary as everyone likes to think it would be, because everybody else does it, but it is just us moving with everyone to do it.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

There is a point I want to raise on that, if I can, but you have another one?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Really simplistically, since I was educated, or lack of education, as my teachers would have said, I think 2 fundamental things have happened in our society. One is stating the obvious, the internet, and history will look back at the electronic revolution and it has been dramatically fast, unprecedented in history, the change that we have had to put up with. The other thing is very much the culture that we do not have a job for life. I am sure we all do, but I advise my children that you do not work for X, Y and Z, you work for James Huelin Limited, my son, because it has to be about you, because that loyalty within the company and the individual has broken down. I am not saying it is a bad thing, but it has. You look after yourself. How are we going to address these 2 changes when the educational system is maintaining the same thing? We are setting people up to get the careers that will go for life whereas that is not necessarily the way that the world is working at the moment.

The Minister for Education:

Would you like to say something?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

I would love to comment. Going back to your previous theme, it is asking what does the GCSE give you? So if you have got an A-Level GCSE English you might be able to analyse a poem incredibly well. That does not mean that you can write a letter; it does not necessarily mean that you are literate. Unfortunately we have some measures within the GCSE system that do not necessarily translate into the broader working skills that an employer might need. Some parts of the GCSE will lead you down one track in an academic route, which may or may not meet employers' needs, and there is always that balance between education opening up people's minds, developing skills and abilities and the down and dirty that you need to get a job and be able to finance yourself at some point, so there is that ongoing balance but there has to be a dialogue, and we will get to the dialogue, between the education sector and the business community to have that type of feedback so that we can inform on how courses are developed. The difficulty of course is how we use the examination boards of predominantly England, although we do use some of the Welsh ones, in order to structure the GCSEs that we deliver. What we tend to do, and our feedback group at the moment is much better when we get to post-16 education, so for example within Trackers, within the apprenticeship schemes there is a very tight and very good working relationship with employers in order to develop that more bespoke niche training to work with an employer to develop someone into those particular areas to meet those needs. If you are asking about that issue about how we change society, there has to be a better dialogue with employers to understand exactly what this qualification means and is that the qualification you want, and therefore when you are putting out your job interview do you need to say English at a "C" because what does that mean for your business?

The Deputy of St. John:

It is also about the aspirations of parents for their children and their understanding of the direction of travel.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Hugely important, and this is going back to what the Minister was saying, if you want to change how things are done we also need to run certain exercises in certain areas, such as Highlands College, so that Highlands College is not seen, for example, as the second-best option because there are some courses and qualifications coming out of Highlands that are very good, the social work course, for example, and again predominantly it is changing parents' attitudes towards certain institutions, which will help get to where we need to go, and also re-examining falling back in love with things like the B-Techs because the B-Techs gave you a different skill set to what the GCSE gives you and that means that for an employer it might be more suited to have certain B-Techs than GCSEs, but it just depends. Ultimately what that means is that we need to be there at careers advice, for our students within the schools and that is something that is on our radar to develop because again it is looking at the different pathways. We do not have a set pathway but it is about allowing our students

to know the different pathways that they can take, when it is right for them, when they can work with employers in order to provide a better education and employment route for individuals. Sorry about the big spiel.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I just want to mention one thing in regard to B-Techs, because obviously the U.K. are heading towards T-Levels, which is a bizarre amalgam of A-Level and vocational qualification which is not clear yet, but it is meant to be the academic level of those. B-Techs are certainly, I feel, being somewhat downgraded next to that. We attended a conference on that and they were very worried about the future of B-Tech, so are there any looks elsewhere, for example in the I.B. (International Baccalaureate) I know there is a younger age I.B. that could certainly address the sort of skills that you are talking about. Have we looked into any of those and have we looked at T-Levels, how they may impact on Jersey, because they will be a real feature of the U.K. education system, which we will not turn entirely away from, and there are technical qualifications of the type they have in Germany, for example, that have been very successful, ironically with Brexit, but there you go. Have we looked at all at those?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

As the Minister said we have our Director for Young People, Further Education, Skills and Learning who is doing a further education strategy, which at the moment I know is including things like apprenticeship degrees. I do not know necessarily whether T-Levels are included in that, but I will take that forward and ask her to include it in that piece of work.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

The second thing is that the model you were talking about, Finland, for example, is exactly what you are saying, it prepares their young people and the exams are just a consequence, because they are educated, so they can go and take their exams and pass, if that is what they want to do. It is still an examination system but that is not the focus. It is a very expensive system and they really do invest. Their teachers are educated to Masters level as a matter of course and that is part of their training. If we are going to do that we have got to spend some money. We cannot do it on the cheap.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

They also have a 60 per cent tax rate, yes.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Exactly. We cannot be a low tax and high spend economy and have the sort of education system that we want. How are we going to bring those 2 things together? That is going to be a challenge.

The Minister for Education:

We have already got a challenge with school funding as it is with the current model that we have, which is following the U.K. I am not being funny but if you look at the U.K. and the under-investment, we are pretty lucky. We know that we have got school funding issues, but it is nowhere near as bad as some of those schools in the U.K. So we are pretty lucky, but it is our future. Why would we not invest in it? From my point of view fundamentally other than health, education is the reason why I pay tax. That is where I want to see it going in the future of our generations because one day they are going to be looking after us as well. It is their money that will be paid into the system that will be paying the taxes of that day. I am not suggesting we are going to go to a 60 per cent tax rate or anything like that but we know our tax system is broken anyway. From my point of view I will sit there around the Council of Ministers and say time and time again I am extremely passionate about education, I am absolutely sure that education should be a priority. It needs to be within all those lines of the Common Strategic Policy. It should be at the very core of everything that we do and understand, but also it is not necessarily just following down a Finland route. This is going to take time to put in and embed. Like I say, there are different areas and systems around the world that we can tap into and use and create a Jersey model that may be better value for money that will be investing in our children.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

It is about taking best practice.

The Deputy of St. John:

A little closer to home in Wales they are partially implementing the Finnish method, so it might be worth looking at how they are managing that approach.

The Minister for Education:

Yes. I have started looking at theirs because they have just recently moved away from using the English testing systems as well. I made it quite clear when I stood as a Senator and I was quite clear that I wanted to go for Minister for Education I am not a fan and I do not believe in league tables. I do not think testing for the sake of testing helps our children learn and for me the core of education is that love of learning and that is what we have got to instil in our children, because they are always going to have to learn in the future because they will be changing, doing different professional qualifications, maybe, and moving around in different areas. Also they are global citizens so it is not just about them staying in Jersey either.

The Deputy of St. John:

Of course it is that learning that shapes our society and we will come to early years and learning in early years in a moment or 2.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Being entirely impartial it is very nice to be having this conversation and talking about education and not just about numbers. I think that is a really important step. Are there any particular funding issues within schools that you are aware of, any particular issues that need to be addressed urgently?

[11:00]

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Where to begin?

The Minister for Education:

Yes.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Wherever you want.

The Minister for Education:

School funding; I think the department, to be fair to them, were very much on the ball at the beginning of last year, so they started doing work around secondary schools. That is a particular pressure on schools at the moment, so what we call the Age Weighted Pupil Unit, which is the amount of funding that the department provides to the schools depending on the number of students that they have. It is 15 years old but it does not take into account things like S.E.N. (Special Educational Needs), complex needs, compliance, F.O.I (Freedom of Information), all those types of things. So all of this has been added on to schools without the extra money. We have a position now where ... also, dare I say it, because we 14 plus which is normally in our system, many other countries do not have this 14 plus step system, but it creates a double funding mechanism because we are providing a year 10 and 11 class at a separate school when they could be taught in the secondary schools themselves instead of moving over just for those last 2 years so we have got a double funding mechanism there as well. We have identified, particularly in our secondary schools, the scale of the problem. We are looking at about £4.8 million extra needed for our secondary schools if we change the formula to include those required legislative requirements and also the S.E.N., the complex needs and all those types of things.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Can I ask quickly does that include Highlands?

The Minister for Education:

No, this is secondary schools so it is Grainville, Haute Vallée, Hautlieu, Le Rocquier and Les Quennevais.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

It is a parallel conversation we have been having and I just wanted to qualify that. That is fine.

The Minister for Education:

No, this is just secondary schools but they were doing that work already last year but we have asked them to go away now and expand that school funding work. They are now looking at primary schools, they are looking at S.E.N. funding so we are looking at the whole funding to see whether we are investing in the right areas, we are supporting in the right areas and we have the right model for our students.

The Deputy of St. John:

Any consideration being given to taking plus 14 education back into the standing secondary schools?

The Minister for Education:

I am not leaving anything out. I think it is an absolutely relevant conversation to have. 14 plus needs to be on the table in terms of discussion from my point of view. There is a much loved community out there that believes in the 14 plus and there are plenty of reasons why people believe in the 14 plus. However, there are also cons to it. So if you speak to a lot of the secondary school heads, they will give you a flavour of some of the issues that they have identified. It creates really bad morale in the school afterwards. People feel like they are failures already. It is like the 11 plus system, your grammar schools. A cohort of your classmates that you spent so many years at school with and you have created friendship groups and you rely on some of these people sometimes and they go and they are out of the school and you are left, it is not good for morale. It is not good for the whole school ethic, mentality, supporting each other and I imagine it is pretty hard on the teachers as well.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, we say that if we properly fund our schools, there will not be a necessity to have that sort of transfer because what we are doing in all of the schools will be adequate and good and then excellent and it will just change the model of what we do because of funding that so do you think that is a key to that possible change?

The Minister for Education:

I think it possibly is a key to that change and the other part of it is as far as if you are looking at ... we have got a bulge coming through to our secondary schools in the next few years. That is going to have a huge impact and we look at Hautlieu and they are already pretty much at capacity and if you have got your 10s and 11s and your year 12s and 13s, if you are looking at a holistic model and what we can do for education, we have got huge opportunities for Hautlieu and Highlands about what we could do and what we can offer there. One of my gripes at the moment is A Levels. You can only do it if you go to Hautlieu. We have got courses coming onboard now where you need an A Level in a particular area so that you can do the vocational part of this course. However, if you have not been to Hautlieu and done that particular A Level, you cannot do it anywhere else and that is not right.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Without stepping on Deputy Huelin's toes - it is just it has come up now as a question that we sort of allocated - do you think the other part of this puzzle is the provision for students who are perhaps very disrupted in school, for whatever reason, which become very focused in the 11 to 16 schools because of the selection process? Is there a need to address that more so that the schools can be more successful without having to deal with that extremely disruptive behaviour that does exist in some schools? Do you think the other end of the scale in perhaps solving the issue of 14 plus is to ensure that there is not that disruption in schools that does happen?

The Minister for Education:

I think it is not just about the 14 plus. Like I said before, we have got a very different demographic there going through the schools. We have got this social and emotional mental health and this is where early years is critical here because it is all about the early help and early intervention but you still need to support those children that have not had that intervention and support early on. Like I say, back to the funding, we need to make sure that the funding ... in terms of whether it is special educational needs, is the reason that these children may be disrupting or it is social and emotional mental health issues? We need to make sure we have the right support in place. The Education Department is the only department that are fully inclusive. We are fully inclusive. We believe in the inclusion agenda and what we have got to do, if we are going to commit to that inclusion agenda, is put our money where our mouths are. So we need to ensure that we have got the right resources and support for those children and sometimes it is not just the children. It is how can we then - and this is where having Education with the Children's Services and Mental Health Services in one area works - support the family because school is just one area that that child is in. They go back home and if they have not got the right support at home as well, then all the work and effort that you put in in the school time may be lost, so we have to look holistically at wrap around support for these children.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

It is also about the service that we have at curriculum around 14 so teachers can identify students that perhaps are struggling with an academic career at that time.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It is having that provision.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Why are there not other courses that perhaps would better suit a student that they might be able to go on? Again, then that happens with perhaps the disruptive behaviour element that you are talking of because let us provide another better constructive route that these students can follow which might better suit them and, again, might address these other issues in the schools.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It is really a remodelling of the education system here, to be honest about it. It is just absolutely necessary and would there be any consideration in that of pupil referral unit which they do have in a number of different jurisdictions to intervene really directly with a small cohort of really difficult young people which we do have on the Island that can be incredibly challenging? I do not know very much about that but would there be any consideration of that?

The Minister for Education:

I think we have got something similar which is the ARC and I cannot remember off the top of my head and I am not going to start flipping through my papers.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, it is a very small provision though, is it not?

The Minister for Education:

It is a small provision because, let us be honest, the inclusion agenda has only really been in place since 2011 when St. James was closed down and so we have brought all these children into the main stream so having a unit that supports that child outside of the classroom and not only just supports that child but you have got to recognise the other children that are trying to learn in that classroom as well. There is a balancing act that goes on here but they need to be among their peers because it is that social element as well because sometimes the best people to tell you as an individual about your behaviour or something like that is your peer.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, but it has been done without the funding, you would agree. The funding just simply has not been there to support that inclusion process.

The Minister for Education:

It is. Well, we have got the Special Educational Needs. We have got social, emotional and mental health funding. We have got Jersey Premium. We have got then the school funding base and this is why we are looking at school funding as a whole. We are saying: "Well, not only is the spending being spent for the right outcomes - and that is the point, the outcomes for the children - can it be targeted better? Can it be provided better?" As I have stated in the secondary schools, we are already underfunding, if we provide the right model for them, of £4.8 million and that is just the school base funding. So then you are looking at the S.E.N. but the argument really is if we believe in the early help and the early intervention, that money should be going in at the beginning and not in the secondary schools. There should be some support in the secondary schools but if we are investing properly in the early years and the primary level - and you will not see this for a few years - but what we hope the outcome in the secondary schools is there will not be as much, as you call it, disruption or particular behaviour that causes problems in the classroom.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

You mentioned that it is a very simple question of funding. What are you doing? How are you going to get it? What resistance? What is the process? What help do you need blah, blah, blah?

The Minister for Education:

All the help I can get.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

As much as possible.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

The reason I am doing it is education is so important and that is why I am sitting here so that is what is a relevant and important question.

The Minister for Education:

So over the last M.T.F.P., we had £4.2 million taken out of our budget. We were unable to meet £1.4 million of that budget for various reasons, mostly political non acceptance to the proposed savings and of course we know that there is the matter of there is no money. There is an efficiency plan being carried out at the moment which I am trying to get to the bottom of and understand. I think I have made it quite clear personally that you cannot cut any more from

education. The majority of our budget is the people. We know already we are underfunding our system. If we really believe in our future and our children, we need to put that money there. So I need to be up on my data, up on my information, up on my evidence and make the absolute relevant arguments, which I do all the time anyway. The Council of Ministers needs to be with me on this and I will make the argument but other Ministers will have competing pressures as well and they will come forward with I suppose some extremely relative arguments. The Minister for Health and Social Services, I am just thinking off the top of my head. The Minister for Children and Housing will be another one. They should not be competing. We should be working together. It is not about one type of model. It is about: "Well, if I do this here and put this money in in this area, does that mean that you will not need to do this area or we can lower that amount and we maybe pilot that instead and we can do this model." So it is having those conversations. We have got to have that in the Government Plan. The Government Plan discussions have started but in terms of the school funding, I want to get the base funding absolutely right first and looking at the outcomes will come over a period of time. I keep saying: "Outcomes" because, for me, it is not just a number on a spreadsheet.

The Deputy of St. John:

Can I intervene because we want to move on?

The Minister for Education:

Yes, sorry.

The Deputy of St. John:

It is a very important subject and what it boils down to is the fact that there is not enough money coming into the system to be able to afford all the things we would like to afford. So what is the current thinking about that flow of money in?

The Minister for Education:

So this is where this time round it is going to be a particularly interesting debate on the Government Plan because we are including income in that discussion. So it is not just about spending anymore. It is about the budget inside the Government Plan so it is income and expenditure which is a really good way and should have been the way that we were doing things in the first place.

The Deputy of St. John:

That is a sea change, yes?

The Minister for Education:

Yes, it is a sea change and this is why this new Public Finances Law coming forward is absolutely critical because it will support things like, historically, we have had capital spending where you have to have all the money upfront in order to even put a spade in the ground. So we will be changing that so it means that you have a 4-year plan but it is the first year you will have to have the right budget. But you are able to go into deficit over that 4-year period but as long as you come back into budget or balance the budget by the end of the 4-year period. So it allows you to spend as and when you need to but we all know the income tax system needs to change. We all know there is a problem with it. When you have a system where, on average, the majority of your population are only paying a 13.5 per cent effective rate in terms of tax - and look at the services that we get for that - I think there is a big question around it. I think if people really believe in investing, what people want to see though is that money going into these things and not being spent on things that ... and there is no outcome or they do not see it benefits the Island and they do not see it benefits them.

The Deputy of St. John:

The reason I asked the question was that the answer now gives the public something to chew on because I think change will create some awkward debate for some people. So having put that answer into the public forum, I would like, if I can, to move on to the Children's Plan. I have a question about what your opinion is on the current Children's Plan and its various facets.

[11:15]

The Minister for Education:

So of course I agree it is a very high level document. There are, I suppose, expectations from a political ... I think it pretty much takes most people with them in terms of the Children's Plan. There are influences within my portfolio in terms of education and the requirements for learning and achieving which I am completely with. As you have heard, I am quite passionate about ensuring that our children learn and achieve what is right for them but like I say, it is a very high level document and it is what we do as politicians. We create these strategies, we create these plans but the proof will be in the pudding, will it not?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

We have a few questions on this and one of them in particular is ... shall I take that one and then we can ... we talked much about widening our education approach and holistic and judging things differently but one of the things in the Children's Plan may well be to increase the number of pupils achieving 5 good G.C.S.E.s (General Certificate of Secondary Education) so, again, we are narrowing back until one indicator of success because we all know a good G.C.S.E. is now a 4

which was a C which may become a 5 depending on the way the U.K. go and that is not just me being trite. It is the truth. So we have even got this movable feast as our indicator. Do you think that should be there? Do you support that part of the plan?

The Minister for Education:

Yes, and the reason why I will say that is because it is not about testing to that. This has got to be looked at holistically and so if you look at some of the countries that I mentioned before in terms of their best practice, they use G.C.S.E. as a higher indicator. It is not about testing to that point but it is what you do to achieve that. It is getting there from point A to point B but it is a measure at a point in a student's life. So it is a very high target, not the outcome itself, but it is a high target in terms of holistically looking at the Children's Plan as a whole and the fundamental question is about what we are doing to support our children to be able to get to that point.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

That is really good. Sorry, but I make the point that is really, really good that. I understand the notion of in the end, if you teach them well enough and you are given the opportunity to support them emotionally et cetera, et cetera, more students will get 5 G.C.S.E.s because they are happy. But what is to stop the schools, as soon as you give a head teacher that target or it is there, they will focus on that because they have to because they feel they are going to be judged on it and the whole thing filters down and all of that good will be lost into this scramble for simply 5 G.C.S.E.s including English and maths?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Because it is not the only measure.

The Deputy of St. John:

I do not want to get away from the plan itself because 5 G.C.S.E.s is wonderful for children that are able to achieve that. The plan itself is a Children's Plan which, you rightly say, is at a higher level than just what we provide in education. It is at a higher level that is intended to create a supportive atmosphere surely for all children in our society. We all know there are many children in our society who do not have the capacity to achieve 5 G.C.S.E.s. You are automatically, within the Children's Plan, at a higher level building in a sense of inadequacy for certain students. I am talking about those with emotional difficulties, those with behavioural difficulties, and those with learning difficulties who will not achieve 5 G.C.S.E.s. Should the Children's Plan perhaps include something along the lines: "We will provide an educational system that will allow all students to achieve their personal potential regardless of their innate ability" rather than 5 G.C.S.E.s at that high level? That is the question, Minister.

The Minister for Education:

That is exactly where I would want it to go personally away. As Minister for Education, I want to encourage ... the question that Deputy Ward was talking about this ... because it is there, do people then work towards that and put the pressure on? I think this is ...

The Deputy of St. John:

The point I am making is is there a group of people in our educational system who will never achieve 5 G.C.S.E.s but the target is there for them to be non-achievers?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

One measurement in the Children's Plan would be that there are other measures in our education system so we cannot ...

The Deputy of St. John:

I am referring specifically to the Children's Plan.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Yes, I know, but what I am saying is we cannot just look at that in isolation.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

What other measures do you mean?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

So, for example, Jersey is working on the 8 good G.C.S.E.s but that will include a language, that will include an art, those types of things so, again, it is looking to broaden. It is so that schools are not just focussing on these 5 and that is it because it is about more than that and I know from the Public Finances (Jersey) Law the Minister is looking at which is also inserted into that law, it is looking at the well-being of people. So are we measuring it out of our education system? Does our education produce confident, happy and well people? That has got to be an important measure in education because if you are not doing that, regardless of the innate ability, you will help them achieve that potential wherever it is and that has to be included.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So you have got to measure and it is easy to measure a number and the schools are not ... what we are saying, I suppose, is is it not a risk that the target is there? There is a 2-fold risk. One school has become focused, let us be honest, 90 per cent or 95 per cent simply on the target and therefore changed the curriculum and narrow it and, second, those who will always struggle with that, we are setting up for failure in our Children's Plan and our educational approach which we

know ... and we believe you when you say about it being more holistic and we absolutely agree with that. We might just be shooting ourselves in the foot and that is that cultural change within a school that this is going to have to be a leap of faith by that school. How can you and we, as Members of the Assembly, ensure that that happens?

The Minister for Education:

Well, I think that you just basically hit the nail on the head in terms of it is an easy thing to do and I think that is the history of: "Well, let us apply something that we have always applied because other people have done it." It is an easy measurement because everyone does G.C.S.E.s so if we put that in there, then we can say at the end of it: "Well, look what we have done." It is much, much harder to prove that you supported someone socially, emotionally and mentally and ensured that their wellbeing at the end of it is absolutely right but that does not mean we should not do it. Yes, it is hard but I get what you are saying in terms of having it ...

The Deputy of St. John:

We are not suggesting that there should not be a target somewhere in education but that a Children's Plan at this level is above education in a sense, is it not?

The Minister for Education:

Well, it looks at all children, does it not?

The Deputy of St. John:

It is about what you would want all children to achieve.

The Minister for Education:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. John:

They are not all going to achieve 5 G.C.S.E.s but they could all self-actualise and achieve their individual potential.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

But then I can throw that back to you. If you say: "Achieve their best potential", is that not also a bit also woolly and a bit difficult to prove?

The Deputy of St. John:

But at that high level, you cannot have specifics. You need to be broader and more facilitative. I am not suggesting it is your work. It is a Children's Plan within which you work.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think that there is a risk that, again, it is this desperate need to measure numerically and with some sort of indicator which is standardised which is the educational reform movement across the globe because it is easier to standardise and numerise which is I think what is the damage to the education system. We have to have a leap of faith and faith in ourselves and trust our teachers and trust our young people more than anything so that they can ... I like that phrase "self-actualise" and become independent people and if we resource it well enough, we have got to take a leap of faith that they will get their G.C.S.E.s at the end. I think all we are concerned about is having that target as the primacy right at the front will get in the way of the good things that you want to do which we desperately want to support. We would just ask you to look at that really carefully because we do not want it to become an obstacle to the good things that we have talked about today. That is the really key thing.

The Minister for Education:

You see, this is the problems with these plans. You put these things in and everyone has got their own opinion or own view and so, like I say, I think this is just something that has always been done because it is easy to basically show how you can measure it. It is harder to turn around and say: "Your self-actualisation" all those types of things of proving it and it goes back to this issue of trust and believing in each other and not having constant negative beliefs that people are trying to do things to worsen everyone's situation.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, absolutely.

The Minister for Education:

I think that this is a safety net and always have been a safety net; a way to put that in place for the public sector to prove that they are doing the right thing. I absolutely get what you are saying and I completely understand it. If it is a document at that level and I am happy to go away and discuss it with the relevant ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I suppose the thing is from my personal experience is that you can talk about this a lot but it filters down from the head teachers to the heads of the department.

The Minister for Education:

Yes. This is the culture that we live in.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Exactly.

The Minister for Education:

That is the problem and culture takes time to change, like I was saying before, and so I get what you are saying. I completely understand that when you have got that there and people are living within that culture that believes that standardisation is absolutely right and that everyone should be reaching that. Otherwise, they are failures. I am happy to go ahead and speak to the Minister for Children and Housing about that.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Particularly within a very selective education system where we setup difficulties from day one so that is one of the issues. Have we covered everything?

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, we have covered G.C.S.E.s ad nauseum I think.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, absolutely.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Chairman, can I suggest we go to Early Years?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, you can.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Only because I know that a lot of these people have come here specifically for the Early Years discussion.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, that is a very good idea. A very good idea. Trevor, you have got some questions on this. Sorry, Deputy Pointon.

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, well, we went to visit Brighter Futures recently and although this is not part of my question plan, it is part of early years and they are doing some good work in trying to develop, with people and their children, early society skills so they begin to become proper members of society and be

educatable. This is really a practical question about whether there might be in the old Les Quennevais school facilities that might be made into facilities that organisations like early years could use to setup satellite facilities that could achieve so much in the bridge.

The Minister for Education:

Interesting question. So of course the Les Quennevais site, once it is closed down and the children are moved to the new one, that land will automatically fall back to Jersey Property Holdings because they are the landlord. They are the ones that have ultimate ownership. So my issue I have at the moment is I have asked Infrastructure, so Property Holdings, to do an up to date review on all of Education and Children's Services properties so that we get an idea in terms of where we need to ensure our funding goes for the capital side of things. So there are all the safeguarding issues and all those types of things but also there are things in the back of my mind that I think we can start doing to create community family centres supporting the schools closer with the family centres so you have that wraparound support. So it is recognising where is the best place to do it and of course if you need public land to do that, Les Quennevais of course would be first site that comes to mind if you are looking at some form of family centre because of course it would sit right in-between your La Moye, your Mont Nicolle, it is near the Communicare, it is down the road from Les Quennevais so it is central. So it is something that I would like to have a discussion with Property Holdings with. That piece of land, like I say, will go back to them and I am sure there are very many areas that will have these bids about what they want to go there but also it is about taking the community around it with you as well because it is right in the middle of a housing estate.

The Deputy of St. John:

So you have it in mind and you are not going to just knock it down and consider it an open field?

The Minister for Education:

No.

The Deputy of St. John:

That is encouraging. So what is the current work being done on early years and funding early years and structuring provision?

The Minister for Education:

So as I have said before, it is gone as quickly as I would like it to, unfortunately. However, what we have done is Deputy Maçon, Senator Mézec and Deputy Doublet sit on the Early Years Policy Development Board and, like I say, because I am looking at it holistically, so conception to 5 years, there is a lot of work to be done here. We are not starting from scratch because if you look across

the whole Island, you have various different third sector, public sector, all those types of areas or private sector as well that are offering some fantastic work and support for our children and young people. Sometimes this is just about pathways signposting, supporting parents and understanding where they need to go and when they need to go there and so we are looking at the whole streams. One of them is the Best Start Partnership you have probably heard of that used to be Early Years Childhood Partnership who have been working with us because they have contact with many of these individuals in the field on a frontline day to day basis who work with these children and know their parents firsthand. That is vitally important bringing back that information so we are not just looking at it from a high level and then planting things on to people. I have made a commitment and I have stated that the Nursery Education Fund, as far as I am concerned, will be as it currently stands at the very minimum so we are looking at expanding and improving that.

[11:30]

But of course let us look at what has happened in the U.K. in terms of the funding side of things and they are not providing the right funding for the private nurseries. They are reducing that funding over the years. It is causing a lot of problems, it is causing some private nurseries to close down and one of the things we have to recognise is that supporting nurseries - not just in the private sector but the ones that are attached to our schools as well - it is a public private partnership and we have to support each other in this because it is ultimately about the child but it is not just one or the other. So we need to take those people with us and what we would like to do is start having workshops. So that is what I was talking about before is having the resource and the officer support on the board so that we can start those workshops and pool all this together so that we can provide the right system.

The Deputy of St. John:

Yet since the introduction of provision in States schools and nurseries for 3 to 5 year-olds, the numbers of 3 to 5 year-olds are necessarily using the private sector much less so, is that case?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

If there is more choice in provision overall then it will dilute itself but that is because there is more choice across the board.

The Minister for Education:

It is a simple supply and demand demographic, is it not? If you have a bulge of children and at a certain point where you have had a large number of children that have been born, you are going to need a large amount of places for them to be supported in. The nurseries attached to the schools

is a long-running historical thing back from the 90s, it might have been earlier, that basically they thought it was absolutely necessary and right to have a nursery attached to every school so the school community get to know those parents earlier, to help children ready to learn.

The Deputy of St. John:

It is my understanding that nursery schools in primary schools have increased in number over recent years.

The Minister for Education:

Yes, so we are now ... so St. Mary is the latest one that is having a nursery school built on to it.

The Deputy of St. John:

That is due to open in 2021?

The Minister for Education:

Yes. Yes. But that is also refurbishment and improvements to the school because it needs it. There was Springfield opened not so long ago.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Was that not a reaction to an increasing demographic of young children that might need nursery care as well?

The Minister for Education:

Like I say, this ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Because that bulge at secondary schools would also have been a bulge of nursery schools in places. There was a lack of provision, I believe.

The Minister for Education:

So we had to add classrooms on to some of the schools as well at the same time. Springfield would have been one of them. They added the nursery on, but they had to add on a classroom to create a 2 form for the reception for that year because they had so many children coming into the primary schools. Education are pretty good in terms of the demographics, knowing when those bulges are coming through and prepare for it, but in terms of the nurseries of course there are going to be these peaks and dips in terms of where the demographics do or do not go. But it is about providing ... for me, it is looking at providing the choice for the parent. One of the issues, and I think we have to look at this quite carefully is that, of course, if your child goes to a nursery at a school facility, they

may have the 20 hours and a lot of parents are working and what those parents need and want is that wraparound. A lot of the parents will tend to go to a private provision because they provide that consistency for that child and that routine for that child for the whole day while their parents are at work.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

That is certainly one of the largest feedbacks that we have had, about consistency of care around the child is one of the most paramount things.

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, and one of my questions was going to be: what provision are the States provided nurseries to cover school holidays.

The Minister for Education:

There are none.

The Deputy of St. John:

I was just going to say, I think I know the answer to the question, but what I am concerned about is - and I do not know whether you speak to the private sector particularly often ...

The Minister for Education:

I have not spoken to them recently, no, but I do try and keep in touch.

The Deputy of St. John:

I am reliably informed that there were, in recent times, 9 nurseries which - private nurseries - are now reduced to 6 and that when St. Mary opens the private nursery in St. Mary is likely to close as well. So that is a reduction to 5. In all, I gather, 100 places are at risk of being lost in the private sector. Now, as you say the nursery in schools cannot accommodate care out of term time, are we not heading down a route that is rather dangerous in relation to childcare?

The Minister for Education:

It depends on what you plan to do with it, and this is one of the fundamental things that we need to start speaking with the private sector about, and the third sector, about how we can utilise those areas better and more efficiently and more effectively for the children and family themselves.

The Deputy of St. John:

My concern is that people without the option of going to a nursery during the school holidays will in fact engage unqualified child minders and so on and put our children at risk rather than having them in a safe, stimulated environment.

The Minister for Education:

No, I completely understand that, and this is one of the issues ... if you look at the Day Care of Children (Jersey) Law, in my view it could be a lot better in terms of ensuring safeguarding and the right support for the children. It is recognising what you want for those children as well because it is not just educational, it is that care, it is that learning play type of environment that they need. Like I go back to the parental choices is really important here but what we have to do is say: "Well, hang on, we have all these nurseries attached to all these schools but they are only open for a certain time" and we have a duty on ourselves as politicians to turn around and say: "Well, is that an effective and efficient use of resources and is it right that we have a building sat there for so many hours which could be partnered or supported with the private or third sector that could support that wraparound care, that could support that consistency for that child." So they are not maybe taken out and put into another setting for a couple of hours while their parent goes back to work. We have to be flexible and understanding to the family dynamics and the work environment that some of these families work in at the moment. We have responsibility in terms of public resources and public finances to ensure that we are utilising our buildings in the appropriate manner.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Just to ask about a slightly different area but within that nursery sector, is recruitment okay in the nursery sector? Are you struggling to recruit staff? We know there is a wider issue with regards recruitment and we will probably come back to that later in the schools and into the future, is that reflected in nursery recruitment, do you know?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Within schools or the private sector at large?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I would suggest both. Whatever knowledge you have of either area. I think in the private sector there are certainly issues, I believe, in recruitment in terms of the trained quality staff that will be needed to maintain the standard of care, which we all want. So I believe there is an issue in private nurseries, what about in the States nurseries, if you can call them that?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

To be honest, we have not specifically asked that question I could not tell you one way or another. It certainly has not been flagged with us as an issue to be concerned about but we are happy to ask that and get back to you on it.

The Minister for Education:

The point on recruitment and retention as well, of course the conversation on this Early Years Policy Board which will be having the workshops and types of things is having that conversation with the private third sector and the public sector, taking them all together. In terms of the quality of the provision, in terms of what we are providing, where and what can we do, because we are all education ultimately, to ensure we have the right qualifications or training, those types of things, and how do we utilise that to the best effect but also how do we support it in the right way. If we create the requirements for a certain quality framework - we have a quality framework at the moment - and we have in there that you have to have certain requirements to do certain care then does that fall on us to ensure that we pay for that right training to ensure our children's safety and those types of things or is it a shared thing? There are a lot of questions around this because there are a lot of good things going on but we have to be working in partnership with these people to ensure the right thing for the children and the family.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Can I just make an observation? The whisper from here is - if I am allowed to listen to what is happening, I do not know - the recruitment and retention in the private sector I think you used the word "desperate", is that right? Have I interpreted your whispers correctly? I will just leave that one with you as an action.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I was going to ask something on that: what might be the factors that lead to recruitment issues? I know there is a nursery assistant apprenticeship starting, that was released today, is that designed to address that issue? The other thing we forget about is retention as well of staff. What do think the drivers are behind that? I think it is probably different from secondary and primary schools. It might not be but if we have a problem with recruitment in nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary we have a huge issue here and we have to identify what the factors are that are creating that problem.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

My sister used to work in a nursery and one of the issues she would highlight was possibly the rates of pay but that means how much are we prepared, as Government, to fund the N.E.F. hours as a contribution. Again, she would always say some parents are giving their most precious possession

over to be cared for and yet people want to pay the lowest rate of pay in order to do it. Then you look at the wider economic context of Jersey, where else could you work in order for the rates of pay and every other industry is always going to have that challenge within the Island. If you want good quality childcare you have to look at the mechanisms in order to make it affordable. Now whether that is provided by the public sector or the private sector is another debate. I think that is a key issue that the board will be looking at.

The Deputy of St. John:

A comment I have heard is that current training at Highlands has not been very suited to the sector, largely because the people applying are not as intellectually qualified as some of the people applying for the finance industry and so on but they are part of a process of meeting targets. At the end of the day, their qualification is not a challenged qualification. In other words, nobody fails.

The Minister for Education:

Okay, we will look into that but I think this is why it is crucial that we have this Early Years Policy Board because - and I chair it as Minister for Education - it is not just about the provision, it is about the quality of the training and the people that are doing the caring. Like I say, it is holistic, there is a huge piece of work to be done here. I will take that away, I will look into that and have a conversation about can we do better, are there better courses that we can put on. Is there a better training model that we can have.

The Deputy of St. John:

It sounds as if there has been a lot of rethinking in the nursery assistant apprenticeship.

The Minister for Education:

Skills Jersey are extremely good and I will give them a huge plug here because they are really good at going out and speaking to employers and trying to put in place the right courses and the right provisions to ensure these people can work in the employment that they choose to go into and have the right skills to do so. I will give them a huge plug there because Skills are absolutely on to it. There is a fundamental issue here, if we have courses that are going on at Highlands that are not sufficient or right for the meeting the quality framework or the quality requirements we expect in terms of our early years we need to address it.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Have final decisions been made about funding of early years or is that going to be a longer-term Government Plan?

The Minister for Education:

That will have to go into the Government Plan. I have stated already ... I did not want to give any certainty to parents but it sounds as if I think I did and I apologise for that. I have stated absolutely as a minimum we will continue with the current system but I have to put certain things forward in the Government Plan that will require further funding. There are ways and means of doing that. So the conversations in the Early Years Policy Board will be around if we look at what the U.K. has done, is that the right thing or not? You look at other models where they put a lot of money in terms of early years to invest in their children in the early years and how that support is provided. If we are to continue having this public private partnership model, we need to make sure that the rate that we offer in terms of the Nursery Education Fund is right and it goes up with inflation every year, not at a reduced amount because, as we know, some of the issues are ... well, a lot of the issues in terms of recruitment and retention are the cost of living in Jersey and that is right across the board, that is not just early years education. It is right across the board. The intention is it has to come forward with the Government Plan. The Government Plan will be debated later this year.

[11:45]

We have only just started those talks as a Council of Ministers on this Government Plan, but I have been very clear with my view of the need for us to ensure that we have the right funding, not just for schools but for early years as well. The point in the Early Years Policy Development Board is to work with private third sector organisations, do these workshops, to tease out some of these issues, and it is saying what we can we do and can we do it ... do we have the money to do it straight away, can we it in phases, what will it look like and what does it mean? Does it ultimately provide the outcomes for the children and families that we are here to support?

The Deputy of St. John:

Might it be worthwhile setting up a regular forum for the stakeholders - it is not a word I particularly like, I prefer tent peg actually - with a forum you would have a continuing update from the sector, both primary school and private sector? You would be up-to-date with the ideas and the concerns and so on that ...

The Minister for Education:

We might have to do that, but like I said it is not as far along as I would like it. The first piece of work I think it is important for us to do is to do workshops to tease out all that information and the details behind all of this, to put it into something ... and it may be a case then that we continue with a forum of people to ensure that we are running it along the right lines. I need the resources to do that and that is one of the issues that I have at the moment in terms of officers being stretched. There is a lot of tension in the department. There are a lot of things going on. Once I get that resource we will

be firing away. But I do take that on board in terms of the forum and keeping that dialogue, the conversation, going.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

There is the Early Years Partnership Board, is there not?

The Minister for Education:

It is Best Start now.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Is it Best Start?

The Minister for Education:

Best Start Partnership. They are supporting us and they do work within the community. I know there are some tensions around between certain ...

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Historically there has been an issue between the private sector and what the public sector have been doing. That has certainly been put on our radar and through this work we know that ...

The Minister for Education:

We were in the middle of it last time, were we not?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Yes, and we know that needs to be addressed.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I am conscious of time. I would like to ask again something about recruitment and retention and where we are in other schools as well. We had quite a few questions with regard to the Jersey Student International Scheme ...

The Minister for Education:

It is the Minister for Treasury and Resources that made the decision.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

The Minister has explained that the J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls) Foundation should engage with families who are fostering young people under the scheme. What will you do to ensure the out of hours, the beyond school hours, requirements on that? It could be that young people are here with

a family and it is outside the school hours that is so structured, how are their needs going to be met during that time?

The Minister for Education:

The out of hours side of things would be similar to ... it is like asking me the question: "What do I do for my son after he has left school? What structure do I provide him?" These people are living within families. What kind of provisional support would they give to these individuals once they finish school? There are also certain clubs and things that the school put on anyway and the access to them would be with the family they are residing with. So it would be down to the child in terms of what they do after school but also what will the guardians who are looking after them within the family context support for them to do after that school period.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I am deeply concerned about this and I am coming it at from my understanding of boarding schools because I was quite fortunate to be able to send my children to boarding schools in England. The dynamic is there are 2 sorts of boarding schools, one tends to be a weekly boarding school and the other is a full-time boarding school. The full-time boarding school, like including weekends provides the education up until 10 o'clock at night every single day. There are activities that are laid on and things that are available and facilities for them. My experience is overseas children coming in - be it Europe, a lot of Germans find the boarding schools very popular and obviously the Chinese, Thai come across - firstly it is very difficult for them to be in this environment because they tend to culturally stay together initially and that is where they get their comfort from. But the most important thing is a lot of the children who live nearby will go home at weekends, meaning that the environment left at the weekends is pretty desolate. They are big buildings and nothing going on. That is a major, major concern because what will happen is they will come over here and they will not have the full curriculum at the weekends to fulfil them mentally, their sporting aspirations, et cetera, that will go on when they are just left within the family unit. So the question is: are we going to be able to persuade 40 families - we are putting a lot of investment in there - to come over here when there are many, many full-time public schools, boarding schools in the U.K. which will be a similar financial commitment that offer a full 24 hour experience catered around children from different parts of the world.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

I think 40 is the aspiration of the schools, is it not? At the moment it is a pilot phase and they are only looking for 2.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Well, then it is even worse if it is 2 because they are going to be very much on their own. One goes to a foster family in Grouville and the other goes to a foster family in St. Brelade, meeting up at weekends and ... which they will do, they will want to be together initially before they move out into the community.

The Minister for Education:

It goes back to the choice of the actual parent of these children that are going into these provisions. If they believe that their child is going to get a very good education in Jersey at J.C.G. and it is the right thing for that pupil, that student, and they are comfortable with the fostering arrangements that sit around that, I would not imagine they would just send them to any particular family, I think there would be vetting requirements in terms of fostering, but it is the parental choice, is it not? You could argue this all the way around the world about all the different types of public education offerings they have but it is the job of the J.C.G. Foundation to promote it in a way that parents feel it would be the right thing for their children to do. Just like other educational systems, boarding systems, those types of things around the world would do.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is the agency that has arranged this not based in the U.K.? One of my concerns is if it is based in the U.K. then at weekends will there be access to the agency that is meant to be overseeing this? I think that is something that needs to be looked at very carefully.

The Minister for Education:

I do not know the exact answer to that. I do not know whether it is in the U.K., however it is the J.C.G. Foundation that have bid for this money. They are a foundation of the J.C.G. School itself. They have an absolute responsibility to ensure that those children get the right accommodation, the right support and the fostering arrangements that are in place provides the safeguarding requirements and I would hope that should that child need access to anything that we have the right support mechanisms in place. But it is J.C.G. Foundation ultimately responsible, that money being paid over to them J.C.G. is ultimately responsible for those pupils as well.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I am totally comfortable with J.C.G. doing the standard curriculum education, I am sure they will an absolutely fantastic job and the children will benefit from that but I would just like to hazard the deep concern from my experience of watching children who come from afar into a public school environment, they do get marginalised, many of them go home if they are not integrated properly because the parents have sent them to the wrong schools. They have sent them to weekly boarding schools and not to boarding schools. It is quite a simple thing that they are not engaged at

weekends. These children need to be totally ... the Chinese in particular, they are not just very good at maths and other academic subjects, they are exploding in the world. Gymnastics is well known, they are taking up golf, they have just won their first golf major tournament. Tennis is huge. I think they are now in the Olympics for tennis. It is really important to give them ... because this is what these parents are going to want to have and I do not see it at the moment. That is a concern.

The Minister for Education:

What I would say is I think the ethics of J.C.G. are very much trying to provide everything that they absolutely can for their pupils at the school and I would imagine they would be supporting the foster family in that respect to ensure that that child has access to as many things as they would want to.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I am not questioning the education, I am not question the intent, I am just raising it as a concern.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I just ask one question? J.C.G. is a state school so it would ...

The Minister for Education:

It is a state school.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

... ultimately be our responsibility, particularly with the corporate parent model, that these children are ... so it would be our fostering services that would have to check up on that.

The Minister for Education:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. John:

I was reassured that Deputy Maçon had given us a number for this particular period in time, just 2 students, which is a relief really because when we saw the headline 40 full-time students we had a vision of social services having to supervise 40 full-time fostered children. They are finding it difficult to do their job already. I know it is not your department, although I think ...

The Minister for Education:

Technically it is. It is a new department.

The Deputy of St. John:

But is this worth flagging up because unless you get recruitment and retention right in social services, how are they going to manage supervising 40 when the time comes?

The Assistant Minister for Education:

That is why this is a pilot scheme so all those types of issues can be flagged up and if it is, in the long term, not sustainable for Jersey we just say: "That is it, we cannot support it."

Deputy R.J. Ward:

How certain are you that the model is not going to be a boarding facility at the school rather than with families?

The Minister for Education:

Well, it is a States school so they would have to come to the Minister for Education. It is our building, it is our property. If we have children sleeping on the property permanently ... yes.

The Deputy of St. John:

But there used to be at one time, of course.

The Minister for Education:

But that was a long time ago. We have an education law ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I have some concerns about the long-term aims perhaps, particularly when the J.C.G. Foundation has received quite a lot of money from the States and will be receiving quite a lot of money from fees from those individual students.

The Minister for Education:

I think we have a responsibility ... like Jeremy says, this is a pilot but we have responsibility to make sure at a point we turn around and say: "Is this working? What demand has there been? What does this mean on our services?" But because it is a pilot we will not know that until it has been in place for, say, a year or so.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

There has to be that cost benefit analysis. If the J.C.G. Foundation is doing very well financially, thank you very much, but it has caused a huge cost on public service somewhere else then absolutely that needs to be looked at.

The Deputy of St. John:

The other cost associated ... we have given the Foundation £100,000, which is in the wider scheme of things nothing really but in their report they are talking about being able to generate figures of £400,000 here and £400,000 there to pay for this bursary or that bursary or the other bursary, they are not mentioning - although it was mentioned verbally - that this £100,000 would be repaid to the Treasury. There is nowhere mentioned in any of the detail that they produced any mention of the £100,000 coming back to Treasury. I wonder whether that has slipped off the edge.

The Minister for Education:

I would hope it would have been in the business case or an agreement under the Investment Appraisal Board that gets discussed between 2 officers and the ...

The Deputy of St. John:

We have seen what has been published and it is nowhere mentioned.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

That question is better targeted to the Minister for Treasury and Resources who authorised the funds. I understood it more as a grant than necessarily a loan but again you would need to pose that to the Minister for Treasury and Resources.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

One final educational question on that, how are you going to see that if students coming from abroad are good cash income for the college and there are limited numbers that there will not be pressure on students at year 9, for example, to leave and go to Hautlieu because they are not as financially useful for the school? I know it sounds very hard-nosed but it is a question that has to be asked. It is a difficult question but it has to be asked. That we will not have year 9 to not stay at J.C.G. I respect the integrity of the school but we have had this question asked to us. It will not mean that some children will be moved on so a more financially beneficial student can arrive.

The Minister for Education:

That would be wrong. I think they make that quite clear but also they have a governing body and I think it is very important to note as well that they have to come to the Minister for Education every year to request an increased in their fees if they decide to increase their fees, which they done for the last 10 years. It is very much a role of mine to kind of question and challenge as well. I have to say, I do not believe the governing body would be anywhere near that point of view. I think they recognise their duties, they very much hold the school to account. They are a good governing body. I would be having words with them but I do not think they would go down that route.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

I think the other issue is it would be wrapped up in the immigration student permit. If you are under that to say you are here in order to study at the J.C.G. so J.C.G. could not say: "Oh, thank you very much, you can go somewhere else into the state sector" they are here for a specific purpose.

The Deputy of St. John:

No, no, the reference was to displacing existing students.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Oh, sorry, right, okay.

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, because the Chinese student who is giving the school 10,000 a year rather than 6,000 or whatever it is a year, which is a benefit, is it not?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I believe the charge for students is 30,000 in terms of ... something around there.

The Minister for Education:

But that payment would also ... you know, if you are displacing your students at year 9, you would also lose the payment from the States for that pupil going on to Hautlieu.

The Deputy of St. John:

But it is replaced ... it is not like for like, is it? The Chinese student is bringing in 10, whereas the student that you are ...

The Minister for Education:

Yes, at secondary school what we provide is a 47 percent amount to that student in secondary school.

[12:00]

Deputy R.J. Ward:

We are just about to run out of time. I wonder if you could give us 30 seconds on where you think recruitment and retention of staff are this year.

The Minister for Education:

We have got quite a bit on this. We came pretty prepared.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

May is a crucial time, as you know, in school recruitment and if we are going to fall off a cliff edge I have always been worried it will happen around May time, when people resign and we have to fill our schools for September. How do you feel that is going? If we can extend over by a minute or so, I think it is a really important question.

The Minister for Education:

Yes, I absolutely understand that. You asked me questions in the States recently - I think it was Deputy Southern - about specialists but we have gone further ... deep dived into it a little bit further and officers have provided us with information on it which we can share with you, if you would like. We have some figures at the end of January which states a turnover rate for teachers and the reasons for teachers leaving over the last 12 months. We have got total teaching positions of 860.85 full-time equivalent, total teacher positions currently vacant is 24.46 full-time equivalent which is a 2.8 percent vacancy rate.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

That is across the board, primary, all the way up.

The Minister for Education:

Yes, that is all the way through.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

At this time of year it is difficult to tell, we are talking about May as a real critical time because people resign around half term.

The Minister for Education:

I think we are pretty much aware the recruitment ... so of the recruitment and retention issues are around your cost of living, it is the same right across the board, like I was saying before. I think also because if you look at our education system, and I think for me - and we were talking about it before - it is that trust and it is the teachers being able to ... they went and did degrees and they went and did these things because they are passionate about what they are doing in that classroom providing for the children. What they do not want to be doing is a whole load of bureaucratic paperwork that takes up the time when they could be standing in front of a child and helping them and supporting them to learn and teaching them. Also the leadership side of things, and where they can go up through the system and whether there is the right support in place. That work is all being looked at. Of course we work on the Education Consultative Council with unions, very closely with the unions about workloads and all those types of things. So it is moving in the right direction. Is it going at a

quick enough pace? All I would say is nothing goes at a quick enough pace from my point of view. I think there is ... we could do things a little bit quicker but we need the resource and the support to do so. But in terms of the recruitment and retention in schools, they need to feel that they are supported in the schools. I am not sure whether that is the case at the moment but what I am hoping ... to a certain extent they may feel supported but I think they feel very separate from what the Education Department in the States is or should I say Government of Jersey, I do not know which one it is.

The Assistant Minister for Education:

Gouvernement d'Jèrri is what you should say.

The Minister for Education:

Sorry. Yes, I am trying to put this in a very simplistic ... but it is such a huge issue. I hope the school funding ... if we can get that right, will help teacher recruitment and retention because they will have the right resources to do their jobs properly. Also if we can get early help and the early intervention side of things in place and that starts to kick in I think that will help recruitment and retention because if you look at the teachers' survey, some of the feedback you get from that teachers' survey, their concerns are being hit by students, or having bad behaviour, it is a difficult environment to work in already and the pressure is phenomenal, especially when all you want to do is do the right thing on behalf of that child. If we can tackle some of these ... it is not going to be perfect, I do not think anything is perfect but if we can tackle some of these issues I think it will do a great deal of good for us. We have some good news stories in terms of, you know, some of our recruitment and retention, we are not doing as bad as I think the likes of the U.K. are, or England is. We can provide you with numbers and details.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Perhaps if we have those that would be great and perhaps we can come back to you after May and see whether there is any change. We would keep an eye on it. Okay, we have gone 4 minutes over, which is not too bad, so thank you very much for your time.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Can I say thank you for coming along without an army of officers?

The Minister for Education:

We have no education officers, this is the private secretary, that is it.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Okay, but it is refreshing for us, on top of your game totally, and without an entourage.

The Minister for Education:

We spend a lot of money on our senior officers so they are off doing something more productive than sitting here listening to me.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Thank you very much. That is a compliment, by the way.

[12:05]