



Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny

Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Children and Education

Thursday, 20th October 2022

Panel:

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (Chair)

Deputy B. Porée of St. Helier South (Vice-Chair)

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville

Witnesses:

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North, The Minister for Children and Education

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour, Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1)

Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter, Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2)

Mr. S. O'Regan, Group Director, Education

Mr. J. Williams, Programme Director, Education Reform

[10:00]

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (Chair):

I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live. A recording of the transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. For the purpose of the recording and the transcript, I would be grateful if everyone who speaks could ensure that you state your name and role. I suggest that the panel members introduce ourselves followed by the Ministerial team and attendees at the table. I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, the chair of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy B. Porée of St. Helier South (Vice-Chair):

I am Deputy Porée of St. Helier South, a Deputy and vice-chair of this panel.

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville:

My name is Mark Labey. I am the Connétable of Grouville and I am on the Scrutiny Panel as well.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Deputy Inna Gardiner, Minister for Children and Education.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

Deputy Louise Doublet. I am the Assistant Minister for Children and Education but I have responsibility for early years, libraries and children's rights.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):

Constable Richard Vibert, Assistant Minister for Children and Education with responsibility for Children's Services.

Group Director, Education:

Seán O'Regan, group director of Education.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

Jonathan Williams, programme director for Education Reform.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you. I would just like to draw your attention to the fact that we have one hour and 30 minutes for this hearing and quite a lot of questions. If we could keep the responses brief, that would be helpful. The first question is from me and is about teacher recruitment and retention. Minister, the panel wrote to you in July and received some data about the number of Island teaching vacancies. At the time of your response on 2nd August there is noted to be 35 teaching vacancies and 37 teaching assistant vacancies. Please could you give us an update on those total vacancy numbers?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Thank you, Chair, for your questions. As per 17th of October 2022 we have a total of 28 teacher vacancies and we have a total of 42 teaching assistant vacancies. In total we have 70 vacancies. It is important really to explain that open vacancies mean approved by the department, and it is in the recruitment process. It does not include position and vacancies that are currently in progress. For example, we have candidates that have gone through the interview but waiting for D.B.S. (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks. This means that people are in their recruitment, some of

them in the early stage, some of them in the final stage, but they would not be recorded in these numbers. This report on vacancies with a teaching or teaching assistants pay group and what has happened since our first communication back in August and September, I asked officers to go and speak direct with schools and to ask for their vacancies. Obviously numbers come differently and this is my question: "What is happening?" Apparently the headteacher thinking about somebody who is going on parental leave in the summer they can record it as a vacancy but this is not included. But from a headteacher perspective, and I completely agree, this is what is happening. What is really important to ... I will stop here but I am happy to continue to speak about recruitment and plans.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Are you concerned about these numbers?

The Minister for Children and Education:

I am concerned about these numbers and also my team are concerned about these numbers. This is the reason that it is still ... as we speak, the work is going. I had a meeting with all headteachers and I had clear feedback that we did not have a dedicated person in the H.R. (human resources) structure who understands education. Since then things are moving. I recognise that what has happened, we had the People Hub which sits in C.L.S. (Customer and Local Services) and we had the Corporate that look into the people strategy, so it was kind of 2 departments. Now, since all these conversations took place I had several meetings with the Chief Minister as the chair of S.E.B. (States Employment Board) and Constable Jehan, the deputy chair of S.E.B., and I am grateful that I think that Education have been listened and what is happening now. We do have some emergencies and we have team within C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) who deal with emergencies; like you have illness, you have parental leave, you have various things that are happening. But what has never happened before, there was no separation between dealing with emergencies to actually look into the strategic steady recruitment going forward because if we are dealing always with emergencies we do not have staff who would deal with proper recruitment. What has happened for the last 2 weeks, and it is just communicating to the headteachers, it goes together to the Cabinet Office. So whatever happens in the H.R. space across the government, called into the Cabinet Office as a delivery unit. Now the delivery unit is the combination between department and central resources to test their framework, how it can work, and education was put as a pilot to see if it does really work. It will be to test about different approaches to candidate attraction, recruitment, onboarding and ensure management end-to-end recruitment process, not just starting to make sure when they started, it is finished within a reasonable time and not progressed too long. Where appropriate it will be also a combination between building a relationship with agencies, strengthening candidate management, develop existing and building new candidates pool and creating induction processes. Since this unit was formed, and this is just to give you a

taste because we are building it, it is something new that we are putting together. For example, vacancies tracker, creative tracker that will be created by this day. I am talking about the weeks. So I have a schedule for October, December; we are still refining it. For example, training, magazine advertising effectiveness, microsites, agency, so we are trying to see how we are building capability going forward.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Just to summarise, this is a new process coming into play?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Absolutely. What is important about this process, what we call delivery unit, will be in direct contact with the headteachers and this is what headteachers told us. We do not want to go every time to a new H.R. person. Now they will have dedicated to the unit, we have 3 people that will be in contact with headteachers and can follow it up.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It will be interesting to see how this works and to review it with headteachers.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Absolutely.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Just following up from that. Within your Ministerial priorities, one of the targets that you identified was to recruit more specialist staff to work with children to access the curriculum. Could you confirm how many more specialist staff need to be recruited?

The Minister for Children and Education:

As per yesterday, because remember I had a question from Deputy Ward and I promised to come back, and as per yesterday we have 21 specialist staff that we need to recruit. This specialist staff, some of them have gone into the ... like urgent quick recruitment and some are going into this process and some of them are trained, as we speak, because we have a special bursary of £25,000 that started this September for this specialist start with short subjects.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, so there are people ...

The Minister for Children and Education:

So some of them in training, some of them we need to recruit quicker and some of them it takes time but we have 21. This is the number as per yesterday.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Within this but slightly different panel about visits, we have heard that contracts for some essential school staff such as teaching assistants are impractical and off-putting for some potential applicants who may be claiming income support because the contract will be under 35 hours a week and term time only. This has been highlighted to us a number of times by headteachers, that they will lose or they cannot get good staff. Could you confirm whether you are aware of this as an issue and whether you have any plans to address this aspect?

The Minister for Children and Education:

It is a really good question and I have heard this and I was really concerned about it when I was on the other side of the table.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

We have heard the same.

The Minister for Children and Education:

We have heard the same from the headteachers. It is one of the 18 Chief Minister priorities for the 100 days, so the Population and Skills Ministerial Group was created. We are 6 Ministers on this group. We are moving pretty fast and only 10 days ago, maybe 2 weeks, I do not remember the dates now, I raised this specific question as a feedback from the headteachers' meeting. Now Social Security are working on it. On top of this it was 2 more issues that were raised which is: are some of them connected to Social Security? It is around the pensioners that they ... if they would work 3 terms their pension will be reduced. The space they are now taking that we will allow them ... not allow them, a guidance will be in place that they can continue to work above 2 terms. The same with the teaching assistants. We have tasked Social Security officers, they are working around this and I hope we will have some indications on how it works and how it will work. We are literally waiting for the presentation.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So we can see that there ...

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, but absolutely right because this is the conversation there and this is what we have heard from headteachers as well, and something that we can probably do in this space.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Now more about training. Reference to upskilling current staff. What opportunities are provided to keep this and teaching assistants undertaking continuous professional development?

The Minister for Children and Education:

I am sure you are aware that following the Education Reform and Funding review we will invest £1,345,000 to learning and development. We started from 2022 and it will continue. For example, this year investment included Masters level accreditations for the special education needs co-ordinators, C.P.D. (continuing professional development) supporting our multilingual learners because it was rolled across the schools, early career teachers programme got funding, and bursary funded for teachers training for hard-to-fill subjects, an additional £280,000 held in school centrally for issue development processes and also £345 distributed among the schools' budget because the schools say we need to upskill this teacher to try and teach in this specific, and school has this flexibility. The headteacher has the flexibility to do this.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That was sort of like something I wanted to ask more about, the funding for the upskilling is it divided between schools, a set amount or by teacher or based on needs?

The Minister for Children and Education:

I think what we had, it is based on needs. What we need in the system and how we address the need. As general approach for me, if we are talking about the children, the families, teachers and capitals project, we need to be clear that we assess the need. Need comes first and not who shouts loudest that I found a lot in the system before.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Another one about schools. Can you tell us how you are working to address the concerns of local teaching unions.

[10:15]

For example, we spoke to the N.A.S.U.W.T. (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women) and said the cost of living, cost of housing is such a huge problem in recruitment of teachers and retention and teaching assistants.

The Minister for Children and Education:

First of all, as I promised, we had meetings with 2 unions and we have a meeting with the teachers union tomorrow. Not just me, the Chief Minister as the chair of S.E.B. and Constable Jehan,

because we must work together with unions. About cost of living and cost of housing, it is important to understand that it is across the board. We have difficulties in teachers, we have difficulties with social workers, we have difficulties with the health professionals. This must be addressed centrally to make sure that we do proper change. Saying this, once we have the delivery unit looking into the teachers, we start a conversation if we need to recruit outside of the Island because we are not having enough specialist teachers. We are talking about licences and possible key workers accommodation to include teachers as well because before teachers were not included for this, and this conversation is ongoing. Like when you have the mini-Budget, and the mini-Budget put to parents, to children an extra £4,000 in the pocket, it is across the board. It is for teachers, nurses and social workers and we would work in collaboration how we can support teachers and teachers assistants specifically and also not just teaching assistants. I would include nursery teachers. It is across the board specifically within the education and how it can be addressed Island-wide because I do not think that the cost of living ... I do not think it will be fair if we just give the cost of living full support, extra support for the teachers but will not give to the nurses or will not give to the construction workers. We need to look at some ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

As long as something happens I suppose. So I think now you have a question, Deputy Porée.

Deputy B. Porée:

My question is with regards to education programmes. The question is: please can you update the panel on the status of the Government's education reform programme?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Thank you for your question. The education reform programme implements the recommendation of the independent school funding review plus additional scope of workforce development because it is really important that workforce development and digital strategy would be included. It is a 3-year programme, which started in February 2021, and so is a little over half year through. We invested £42 million of additional funding over the period 2021 and 2024. The programme really brought a complex ... to be honest, I have heard about this programme and I saw this programme before I have been elected this time and become a Minister. But even when I became a Minister, and I had already several briefings, I am still getting my head around about how huge the programme is. I am sure that you have seen ... as I promised, the funding formula was published a couple of days ago and it is published as it is with all calculations. I know it is new and I am sure ... it took me time to go through all this funding formula and all the calculation. Jonathan was extremely helpful with explaining all the numbers. My questions were: can we see that all government ... non-fee-paying schools are better off from this formula? The difference is according to the needs. We will work with this formula. We will be happy to have another meeting

with yourself and to hear your feedback because it is the first formula. We cannot say that it is perfect but it is better than it was before. So this formula, it is not that because you have 20 children you receive an exact amount of money. If you have 20 children and only 2 with additional needs you would have less money if you have 20 children with 10 with additional needs. The funding now will go according to the needs, but I am sure there is stuff that will continue to work and approve.

Deputy B. Porée:

Thank you for your answer. With regards to the question, one of the programmes we are aware of is the programming related to the Bell Foundation framework with relation to children with English as a second language. Would you advise us how the change is progressing at the moment?

The Minister for Children and Education:

I think that this progress was really good. As somebody who has English as a third language, I can appreciate. If we look at the numbers, we have 26 per cent of pupils and students in school that do not have English as their first language. I think this number is really important to remember. I do not think that we had this number before. Another number that I was personally surprised on, on 5th May when we launched this strategy we had 62 languages that are spoken in our schools across the community.

Deputy B. Porée:

So that support is really important.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

But to celebrate it as well, what amazing diversity.

The Minister for Children and Education:

I am sure that if you visited schools, I am not sure ... did you go already to the Rouge Bouillon?

The Connétable of Grouville:

We are going today.

The Minister for Children and Education:

You are going today, okay. I cannot join because I have so much things. I was in the Rouge Bouillon. If you go to Rouge Bouillon, if you go to d'Auvergne, you are coming into schools and you see the languages, the flags, all different signages. It is amazing how the school recognise, and I think the moment the child and his first language or her first language, a child's first language is recognised, it gives you a bit more confidence and belonging. So now they have been asking:

“Would you read the poem or would you sing a song in your language in front of the class?” so they are not ashamed that they cannot: “I do not want to speak poetry, I do not want to speak this language because I would like to be Jersey Jersey.” Actually I am different and this is a celebration. Saying this, what we are doing now, and this is now training going through all provided schools, multilingual learners training. So in each school will be more ... it is already multilingual lead teacher. All children will be assessed in their efficiency in language. We are using the Bell Foundation. The Bell Foundation gives a really good framework and if you would like to have a briefing, because it would probably take an hour and a half to explain, I do not want to take all the time from the public hearing, but the Bell Foundation give 6 levels of proficiency in the language. Support to school will be according to the number of children, according to their level. So the first one when a child comes from anywhere in the world and do not speak any language, the amount of support that children get into school funding-wise and support-wise will be the higher. If children can speak some English but they cannot really write or read it, it will be easier. So when you are going to number 6, it is when a child grows up in Jersey, speaks perfect one language ... you know, bilingual completely. So it will be less support obviously. It is in place and we are looking into making sure that we have ... there is G.C.S.E.s (General Certificate in Secondary Education) in Portuguese. We are working with the Polish to see how there can be G.C.S.E.s in Polish. The Polish teaching is after school. I spoke with teachers and I spoke recently with Le Rocquier headteacher because they were one of the first ones that their children did G.C.S.E.s in Portuguese, and I asked: “How does it work, would you like to continue to have it after school?” I mean because it is working together with the Portuguese institute. “Or would you like to have it within school?”. Apparently it was interesting to learn that you speak your language it is not necessary you are ready for G.C.S.E.s in Portuguese in the English system. So you can be perfectly fluent... also I was like: “Are you serious?” I was surprised about this. So you can be perfectly fluent in your language but there are different requirements. There is a requirement to pass the exam, you need to be trained and prepared differently. So it is not, if you speak you are ...

Deputy B. Porée:

It is the grammar.

The Minister for Children and Education:

It is the grammar, it is how you answering the question.

Deputy B. Porée:

You have to understand the grammar so you have to have the reading ability as well as the oral.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Absolutely, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can you just sort of bring the question to a summary?

The Minister for Children and Education:

It is work in progress. We have a multilingual lead in each school and the children will be assessed and the manual has already come, it is all in the process ... allocated to school according to their proficiency in the language and number of children with ...

Deputy B. Porée:

So we could come back to it maybe to see how the progress is taking place? That would be great, thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Could I ask you about the independent review in respect of inclusion in education and is there now a definition of inclusive education?

The Minister for Children and Education:

It is a working definition of the ... I just would like to read it out. So what is happening: "Inclusive education is where every child feels valued and respected and has access to and is able to participate in learning, demonstrating their capacity to reach their full social and academic potential regardless of their background, personal characteristics and individual need." This is our working definition. Why I am saying about working definition, because we have an oversight board and we have a delivery board that has just been formed. A delivery board will engage with all stakeholders because we started to work. The review was published in December 2021, less than a year. It has 50 recommendations. So we will work with yourself, we will work with States Members, we would work with teachers, we would work with parents along with children that we publish standards. This will be refined. It is not final but we do work with this.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is starting.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, because we needed to work with them.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

On the subject of inclusive education, what measures are in place for neurodivergent children; maybe they are on the autistic spectrum or they have A.D.H.D. (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), who are refusing school? So are there measures in place to make it more welcoming?

The Minister for Children and Education:

The work that is ongoing, when we have children with A.D.H.D. and autism spectrum first, it is really important to separate between these 2 groups because their needs ... and we are working with them different. If I start with the autism spectrum, it depends where on the autism spectrum the child is. Some of them will thrive in mainstream education. Some of them will be okay in A.R.C. (Additional Resource Centre) classes with special additional resource centre. Some of them would need to go to Mont a L'Abbé because they need almost one to one. We are investing and this is the inclusion which we have £6 million in the Government Plan, and hope it will be approved, to make sure that we have more A.R.C. generally in schools because the demand for them has grown. About A.D.H.D., again it is several things and we need to work together with the parents and the teachers. As we speak, we just started, we need to consider to do the teacher training because it is not about a child fitting the system it is how the system fits in the child. Some children with A.D.H.D. can be looked as they are mischief and they misbehave, but sometimes if they stay behind the desk for 20 minutes and 20 minutes they will run and they will come back, so they need to arrange different types of activities, and we need to train teachers. We need to give teachers support to work with them. Also, hopefully the funding will be approved. We would have extra teaching assistants and special educational needs support within the school. So when you have one teacher and one teacher assistant across all 30 children in each school it is very difficult for 2 people to address when you have 10 of them with special educational needs.

[10:30]

The moment that this funding is approved, and we are talking about 117 extra people coming into the system, means the work with this children will be distributed between more people, they can give more attention and can create their stuff. To be honest, it is very difficult for all children. I think that some children even without A.D.H.D. they have days when they do not want to go to school. They refuse to go to school and parents facing how we are bringing them to school. It is difficult.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I know there are lots of families where, my own included, there is A.D.H.D. and people on the autistic spectrum - it is often both - so you will be meeting with parents?

The Minister for Children and Education:

We are putting now support ... not me personally. I am happy to meet the parents and to hear but parents ... there was an article on BBC Jersey I think on Friday, and since the report on Friday parents have reached out to me. Some of them I had a telephone call on Saturday, with some of them I exchange emails. What is clear to me is that some schools are dealing with it better than others because some schools had more support, some schools had more practice, some schools have more trained staff, so we need to make sure this is standard across the board and we need to understand we cannot continue to tell the child they need to behave when they have this. So we need to make sure we have enough support and we also need to support parents. We need to work with parents and how they work with their children. It is also very difficult for parents.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

I think as part of the inclusion review one of the recommendations was identifying needs earlier because then, of course, you can help the child and prevent issues occurring. Where a child has got to the point where they are refusing school, that is obviously where that relationship with the school has broken down. What we are learning is that the relationship between the child and the adults in the school is key to a successful education for the child. So where the child is supported from early on hopefully we will not see school refusal going forwards because we are starting to invest from a lot earlier.

The Minister for Children and Education:

It will take time. It is major, it will not be within 3 months. I cannot say at the next public hearing but hopefully within a year we will see proper change. It will be on individual levels but I think as a system it will take time.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

Different levels as well. So from the Education Reform Programme the educational psychology team has grown as well, that specialist support. There is more capacity there as well.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, and also we are reorganising social, emotional and mental provision which will be developed under the new leadership, newly appointed executive headteacher, Sarah Anderson-Rawlins. It means that you would have representatives ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Is that the virtual school?

The Minister for Children and Education:

No, not just ... it will be the virtual school but there also will be a representative within the school who can support teachers and support learning, expanding brilliant services to school.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, that is good, thank you. My next question was going to be about the new funding formula but we have already talked about that a little bit but I just want to raise one thing. It was about the support in the schools for local graduate teachers, based on £1,333 for term 1, for example. Just considering that we have a worrying shortage of teachers, do you think that a higher amount could enable more positions for graduate teachers? Do you think there should be more in terms of this programme?

The Minister for Children and Education:

We need to review this. It is the first time that we have this clarity of what is there. I am happy to come back to this within 3 months when our recruitment delivery unit will do some work and the feedback is something we will need to consider. I do emphasise, please raise with us because this question has been raised and it will stay with us, as will the specialist teachers that Deputy Ward raised in the question. It has my attention and my focus, and it just emphasises how much we need this delivery unit.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is on the subject of schools but slightly different, please could you provide an update on the joint work between the Education and Justice and Home Affairs Departments to create an educational programme to deter young people from crime? This is the replacement for the Prison Me No Way programme.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Deputy Doublet is also Assistant Minister for Home Affairs so this is joined together between Home Affairs and Education.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

In one of our first team meetings in Justice and Home Affairs we looked at the Building a Safer Society piece of work, which is out of date and desperately needs to be updated. That is a priority for the Ministerial team. It is going to be building a safer community and to recognise the community approach of this new Government. As part of that the Minister is taking on board the importance of educating children in schools and crafting that within the department. The priority for that is something that can be ... first of all, we are going to have young people co-creating it with us. It is very important to us in Justice and Home Affairs that we find out where the young people are in terms of what is their understanding of the issues that they are facing and what they need so we can

craft something that will be really targeted and help them to understand social issues, and prevent issues occurring. Critically it will be able to be continually adapted and reviewed to meet current trends and social issues as they emerge.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Do you have an idea of when this might be in place, when you will have a pilot in place?

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

I do not have a date on that but I can get back to you. I would have to check with the Home Affairs team.

The Minister for Children and Education:

The only thing that we said, and this is in Richard's remit ... we work together and there is some stuff that we separate that Richard would be attending to, like the Intensive Use Support Oversight Board.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):

The oversight board, yes.

The Minister for Children and Education:

That is specifically for the use in the Children's Services area.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):

Basically the board is for C.Y.P.E.S., S.o.J.P (States of Jersey Police) and other partners from relevant agencies to identify and assess strategic and operational issues relating to missing young people, some of whom are in the care of the government, anti-social behaviour and to share information and leading to corrective action plans, reducing the amount of anti-social behaviour. Obviously as well as anti-social behaviour, one of the aims is to reduce instances of crime committed by young people. So it is separate from the Youth Criminal Justice Board. The intention is for it to meet monthly and, in fact, the first meeting is at the end of October, on 28th October. We have yet to have a meeting. It is something that we can report back on at the next Scrutiny hearing and hopefully at that point we have a clear way forward how the board will operate.

The Minister for Children and Education:

We talked about anti-social behaviour and we talked about missing children, there is a big concern that we discussed at our last Ministerial meeting around exploitation and this will be added to the terms of reference. We will raise it in October because it is not about the missing, it is about what is happening with them when they are missing and how we make sure that they are safe. It is about

exploitation. I think we need to have the conversation around exploitation and we need the public with us, it is not just Education that can deal with it, it is across the board.

Deputy B. Porée:

I would like to ask the Minister a question about skills. Could you please confirm whether you have any feedback about the take up of the Inspiring the Future platform, which was launched over the summer?

The Minister for Children and Education:

The feedback, you mean ... I know about this platform, I need to get back to you with the numbers. I do not have the numbers about this. We are contributing, we are using it. We will come back to you with the numbers about the uptake, sorry.

Deputy B. Porée:

Do you know Skills Jersey are promoting this particular scheme? Have you been in touch with them?

The Minister for Children and Education:

We were very fortunate that we could join and contribute a small amount. What it is doing is allowing ... the schools know it is happening, all schools received information. There is the possibility to manually contact employers direct if they have a specific need or request Skill Jersey to engage with employers to have this engagement facilitated, yes.

Group Director, Education:

If it is helpful, Minister, Deputy Porée, last week I chaired the half-term meeting with all the primary headteachers and there was a joint presentation from Skills Jersey with Cris Lakeman, who is the chief executive of Every Child Our Future, the charity who are the partners. There was huge interest from all the Island's primary headteachers about the on-Island ability to get talent into schools to inspire children to see people like them doing great things in other workforces than the most commonly promoted through other very good internships and apprenticeships, but also the national database that is available. So there was a lot of interest as recently as last week, and that is in tandem between the charity and Skills Jersey.

Deputy B. Porée:

Thank you. My next question is very much regarding what we are talking about. C.Y.P.E.S. is currently led by an interim director. Please could you confirm whether there is a timeline for confirming a permanent director to lead the department?

The Minister for Children and Education:

From my last conversation with the C.E.O. (chief executive officer) she has committed to confirm to the accountable officer a permanent director general arrangement by the end of October. So in another 10, 11 days we should have it confirmed, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Now, I have a question that was mentioned in the States Assembly recently about French language teaching in schools. What support is available to schools for French language teaching?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Okay, as we know French is one of the official languages and currently only compulsory languages are provided in school at key stage 2, as per the Jersey curriculum document. They have a dedicated team of advisers and it is fully embedded in the curriculum. It is reported at the end of year 6, alongside maths, reading and writing. The French experience is led by Rachael Surcouf and assisted by another part-time teacher as a programme they taught in term blocks at school. What is important to think about that since becoming an optional in key stage 4 - and this is open for public consultation, public discussion - and what I found when I was elected, is all government-funded school G.C.S.E. entries were lowered. So the moment that in key stage 4 it became an optional and not compulsory the G.C.S.E. entry is lowered. However, there are pockets of high entries notable in a couple of the government-funded secondary schools. G.C.S.E. results in some government-funded secondary schools had to have a positive impact on value added result for each student or school roll. But the level of entries is in decline, however the new exciting project has started between Jersey schools and Normandy schools, which has an impact on French. I hope we will have some ... the moment that you have this communication, not just the language that you teach at school but you have practical meeting with students, French students, communication and engagement, it might grow. We have also started to look into possible study at the University of Caen of children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds needing to visit France. It is a question of if we are making it compulsory, mandatory, or we just giving extra curriculum and creating the interest.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We were interested to see at Springfield School they are teaching French from a very young age. Just one more question about this. We have heard that there was some French language teaching going on schools that was stopped during COVID and it has not started again.

The Minister for Children and Education:

I need to check with my group director.

[10:45]

Group Director, Education:

As is referenced by the Minister, the French language experience is a bespoke programme in year 5 of every year group. In 2016 we doubled the amount of compulsory French speaking in all of our primary schools. It is now year 3, 4, 5 and 6. There are excellent examples, like you have seen at Springfield, for the very youngest. Under COVID rules the number of visitors going in, whether they were the specialist teachers we put in or language assistance from the Alliance Française with whom we have a good relationship ... that is now back on.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is?

Group Director, Education:

It is. Those COVID restrictions were lifted so there should be no reason why the work is not going on. If you have any specific examples of concern, please share them and we will look into that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, okay.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Thank you, Seán, really helpful.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Our next question is from the Connétable.

The Connétable of Grouville:

My questions relate to the digital education strategy. Please could you update the panel on the Government's work to develop a digital education strategy?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, I am learning it as well. I have just had the meeting and I found that apparently there are 3 strategies that I need to put into action. Jokes aside, the digital education strategy will set out our priorities and commitments for the children. We definitely know that digital education in schools is not now at the level that it should be. For me digital education is one of the key things in the curriculum to ensure that they have enough skills for the future. What I found is we had children in the digital world project commissioned by the previous Chief Minister in 2021 and completed in 2022. This report carried out by the Ministerial government project steering group examined the extent to

which children's relationship to digital will have changed during the pandemic. There was a consultation period and the teams identified a crucial role of parent carers in keeping children safe online, the management of the child's digital footprint and need to develop children skills in the digital space, among other significant actions. Now, I received a draft of the digital education strategy report which will be published on 10th November. It will be at the digital education event. Now, we did have the Digital Jersey strategy that was introduced in 2018 and Digital Jersey have gone and updated the Digital Jersey strategy which will also be introduced. We have the Digital Jersey strategy in one report, we have the digital education strategy in another report and we have the Chief Minister's report that was published so what we are doing in this space is on 10th November we are doing a joint event. As I said, we cannot have 2 strategies running parallel, we need to bring it together and make sure that we are creating the Digital Jersey strategy when the education strategy is an integral part of it. So if we are talking about teachers teaching a curriculum for education, which we will need to have a special digital curriculum, it needs to be supported across the Island. We must start digital education early, early, early in the primary school because if they are not started early in the primary school with full support we will not be able to support our industry and support our Island to go forward in the future. This will be 10th November. I am sure an invitation will be sent to States Members. It will be a questions and answers panel and we are bringing it together with Digital Jersey. I feel it is important to do together and not separate anymore.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Excellent. My next question relates to another report, the Children and Digital World report that was published in May.

The Minister for Children and Education:

That was the one I mentioned by the Chief Minister.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Exactly, so I think you have already answered that, thank you very much.

The Minister for Children and Education:

As I said, it was so confusing when I was elected and I saw this. I thought: "How many digital reports do we need to do?" Let us stop the reports and do the actions.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Absolutely. Thank you for your answer.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Thank you for the question.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The previous Jersey Youth Parliament published a report on education reform, which has now been formally presented in the States Assembly. The report included recommendations for the rejuvenation of the P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social, Health Education) curriculum. Could you outline your thoughts or confirm if you plan to address its recommendations?

The Minister for Children and Education:

It is a really welcome Youth Parliament report. I have 2 reports from the Youth Parliament that our department will respond to. One on P.S.H.E. and another one on mental health and we committed to officially submit a response to the States Assembly. With P.S.H.E., we just yesterday had our first meeting with leads within the department. I will hand to my Assistant Minister for Children and Education, Deputy Doublet, because she will be leading on reviewing the P.S.H.E. curriculum.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

I picked up on the P.S.H.E. because it was a recommendation of the Youth Parliament. I put that in my manifesto. Since I have looked into it I realise that we do need to review the P.S.H.E. curriculum in Jersey and we had a meeting yesterday. That is going to be initiated. I have to say, I am so impressed with the Youth Parliament.

The Minister for Children and Education:

It is amazing the details they put.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

Absolutely amazing and so helpful to us. We hear that. We absolutely hear what they are saying in terms of them being able to influence going forward. They are going to be main source of helping us to decide what young people need as part of their P.S.H.E. curriculum. I think it is loud and clear that they need improved sex and relationships education that is fully inclusive of L.G.B.T. (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) children and also life skills. You know, really basic things like money management and ...

The Minister for Children and Education:

Cooking, self-defence. Yes, they asked for cooking. You know what, I think this is skills that were lost. I like cooking but it is something that really helps and it is healthy.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

Yes. Yes, so we are going to be using that as a framework, as a starting point, for when we review the P.S.H.E curriculum.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, and I think something else to bear in mind, we would not ... obviously there are teachers that officially need to deliver a P.S.H.E curriculum but what we have heard from them, and this is really on my mind, that it is important that P.S.H.E. lessons will stay because in some schools they can be easily replaced by others. So to ringfence them. Another important point that stuck in my mind that they said was across the schools it is so different. Some children in some schools received very rich but other schools had little. We need to make sure this is standard and we need to follow it up from the department. So even though we give lots of flexibility to the school to address children's needs, as a department we need to ask why they decided to exclude this or that. Why is it not there? Sometimes there can be very valid reasons, that the children in that particular class are not mature yet. We have some schools with children, 75 per cent, that when they come into school they are not up to expected development. So we need to make sure that we are very clear. This is the P.S.H.E. curriculum, it needs to be delivered throughout the schools and it needs to be ringfenced.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So we can have more consistency?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes. Because we are now in a public hearing and people can hear this, some of the subjects are delivered by external ... because they are specialised. I have been in communication with the charity and the social group that are already delivering in some schools the curriculum around drugs and alcohol. They have their workshop or way to deliver and we would like to engage because we have seen the Youth Parliament P.S.H.E. curriculum suggestions that were published and there are charities and professionals out there, even the finance industry, who can deliver financial literacy. So we will create a list of the possible providers. So if the teachers feel they are not very strong in a subject they have a list of approved providers from the department.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Just quickly, one thing to add on that. There have been calls, especially lately, to incorporate suicide prevention into the secondary school curriculum. Could you confirm whether you are supportive of this and will you take it forward?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Since it has been raised by Kezia's family - it was raised very publicly there - the interim associate director of Mental Health and Well-being has already discussed this initiative with the family. What we are going to do, we are going to research ... because we do not have it in the curriculum, we need to see how you deliver because it is a very sensitive subject. I think we need to speak about

it. The question now is how we do it. What he also raised with me, which I did not think about initially but is very valid, that we need to train staff to make a risk assessment and to create support after this. It is a very important subject, it is important that we talk about it, but we need to have the right support in place for follow up sessions because we do not know how ... so we need to put the whole package together and make sure that we are delivering training and the support after.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Sadly it is not always on the surface and it can be quite difficult to find.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, so I am very grateful for them raising it and bringing our attention to it. It is in progress, we just need time to think. It will be incorporated because we are doing an overall review of the P.S.H.E. curriculum.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

Just while we are mentioning this, and obviously the public are listening, the most important message that we can advise any child who has those thoughts is to tell someone. As soon as they have those thoughts, tell a trusted adult as soon as possible and make sure that they are confiding in somebody.

The Minister for Children and Education:

It is difficult, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I am just aware of time so I will skip back to a question if we have time. I will go on to the next one about early years education. We note a number of recommendations from the Early Years Policy Development Board report in 2021 refer to early education services. Please could you provide an update regarding how those aspects are being addressed?

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

Sure. I was part of that policy development board and I was delighted that the previous Government accepted those recommendations. Since I have come into this post the work is already under way for some of those recommendations, which is fantastic. There are some fantastic officers working on this. The current N.E.F. (Nursery Education Fund) offer, that has already been increased to 30 hours for the 3 to 4 year-olds. It was at 20 hours and the hourly rate was increased so it was better funded for those nurseries. That is in place and children and families are receiving that currently. There was also a recommendation to establish an integrated development review at age 3. A pilot is currently underway and I have been able to input into and help shape that pilot. I did have some

questions about that pilot and I have been seeking advice from experts in the area and learning about development checks in other jurisdictions, and whether 3 is the correct age to target that at. It is very helpful that this is in a pilot stage. I think it is November that should be completed, by mid-November. I will be able to get lots of information from that pilot about whether practitioners think it is effective, whether it is at the right stage, should it be earlier, should it be much earlier or should we have more development checks than just the 2-year check and the 3-year check? Should it be called a check at all? Lots of learning to be had from that and I am looking forward to hearing back from the practitioners on the pilot. Another recommendation was around the free hours for 2 year-olds and I know, Chair, that this is something that you have been particularly interested in. I was myself. At the moment we do have recruitment issues across the board and we certainly have that in the nursery sector and the childcare sector. We had a meeting with the Jersey Early Years Association yesterday and their primary concern at the moment is that they need to get more staff in their nurseries. They are telling us that places are full at the moment. I am hearing that from parents as well that parents are seeking nursery places or childminding spaces and they are not able to get spaces unless they are looking well in advance. That is a problem, not just for children because, of course, high quality childcare and early years education is critical for children's future life outcomes, but childcare is also essential infrastructure for our Island, and I think this Government understands that. I have not seen that from previous Governments so there is that understanding there of the importance of early years. For me, the free hours for 2 year-olds in a wider sense, that is something that once we have addressed the recruitment generally in the nurseries that is something I really want to go to in the future. What we have been able to do is take a more targeted approach with the 2 year-olds. So we have the Jersey Childcare Trust, a wonderful charity that provide support to children with special educational needs at that early stage.

[11:00]

I know this Government is big on the early intervention but Childcare Trust have been doing that for years and they provide those support workers so that 2 year-olds with special educational needs can be in a setting, whereas they would not otherwise be able to. I am sure you are all aware of the fantastic work they do. We have already been able to increase those spaces, I think by 20 additional places. So there are families already receiving that. Yes, the plan is to address that in future and that is definitely a priority for me. That is something I would happily pursue.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is difficult, is it not?

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

It is, yes.

The Minister for Children and Education:

But investing in the early years we recognise is so important. It is easier to build a child than to rebuild an adult. We must, we need to do it for our children and we need to do it for Jersey.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Student finance. We have gone from one end of the education spectrum right to the other. Minister, thank you for your letter on 4th October where you responded to our queries about student finance and the granting of allowance funding provided to students this year, this coming year. Please could you update us on the numbers of completed claims and incomplete claims?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, as per yesterday, first of all we have 1,039 completed claims. Now, this is the easier number. I will try to get it as clear as possible not to confuse yourself and the public. The process - and I have learned it - there are 4 stages in the grant application. The first stage is the initial form, not the full submission. We would like to have a grant, okay? An initial form not necessarily going into the full application because some people decided to take a gap year, some people decided that they will go into finance and to progress through there. There are various things why people put in an initial application and this is why there is sometimes confusion between the numbers. Because the initial application was 1,582 but between this and what we have it is different. Now, there are 2 forms, one should be completed by the parents and one should be completed by the students. It does not matter if the parent completed the form, the student completed the form. So we have an outstanding. I asked yesterday: "How many are outstanding?" I was asked: "Are you asking about outstanding sitting with us or outstanding when we are waiting for something to be submitted?" So around 30 applications are sitting with us, approximately 25 of them are waiting for the accountant ... basically it is business accounts so the business accounts should be assessed. Because it is the first year that it is going through this process we are now putting in place training so the next year our officers will not need to wait for the accounts, they will be trained to assess this part. But if you are asking how many are sitting with us, it is approximately 30. Now, yesterday - and I am going back to this - they have sent 124 emails to chase the form from the students because there is something that needs to be submitted and 88 emails to chase the form from the parents. It is HG2 and HG7. Why are we sending the emails? Because we realise we need to give a reminder, maybe people are not aware that they need to submit for us to be able to process. They still have until 31st December to get it. I hope I have explained where we are at. The bigger problem that I found, would you believe, I literally took a picture yesterday because I could not believe it, this is the files and this is the cabinet. It is all manual. Now, the moment that we finish this one everything will be scanned in ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

Good luck with that.

The Minister for Children and Education:

It will be by the next year, by March. On top of this will be electronic submission. So next year we will not have some paper handed in. It will be a link. Also all existing students that already have their digital file the officers are going to send them earlier, not waiting for the new cohort to come in. All who are in the system, they will be sent an email in advance and when they submit it will be submitted into their electronic file and not filed in ... we need to do the process. It was not easy this year and we know there were delays but it is definitely something that we are going to improve the system next year.

The Connétable of Grouville:

It sounds very encouraging.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Was that helpful?

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, I am very encouraged to hear that there are changes for next year because it has caused quite a bit of distress, I am sure you are aware.

The Minister for Children and Education:

I recognise ...

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):

We will also have extra staff for next year when we start to receive the applications. They have trained the staff and will have 3 additional staff when the initial applications come in.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We are hoping that this form is not as complicated as other forms within our States remit that are out there to fill in sometimes.

The Minister for Children and Education:

They are complicated.

The Connétable of Grouville:

The supplementary question is: can you confirm the average time from the issue of the award letter to sending a payment to the student?

The Minister for Children and Education:

It is a week.

The Connétable of Grouville:

One week.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes. If they submit on Monday, Monday next week it would be with them.

The Connétable of Grouville:

There is a specific process for that?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, a specific process.

The Connétable of Grouville:

So it is faster than other payments?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, they have been prioritised apparently. There are some people in the C.L.S. waiting for different payments but because it was for a big cohort and we are talking about students that were outside of the Island needed to pay for their accommodation and it was critical that ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

Very distressing emails and I am sure you have received more than us.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, just an apology from us and we are planning to make it different next year. It is already better. I think when we have 30 outstanding we just need to finish it.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That has improved a lot. Thank you, Minister.

The Minister for Children and Education:

I ask the public to please check their emails, we are still waiting on almost 200 forms from the public. Another request, please update your mobile because my team started to send reminders by text but some mobiles are not in the system and some who have moved to the U.K. have a new mobile. It will help not just to send the email but to send the text to say: "This form is outstanding."

The Connétable of Grouville:

Finally from me about this subject: how many maintenance grant payments are still to be processed for the first term?

The Minister for Children and Education:

This is what I am saying, from our perspective, if we have all forms it is just around 30. But around 200 emails were sent where we need to receive the last paper.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):

I think what they did say is that the chasing they were doing yesterday, they have already contacted the people several times before to send those forms in. The reason for the delay ...

The Minister for Children and Education:

Is not just with us.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):

... is in the hands of the students or the parents.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Communication?

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):

Yes.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Sometimes what we found out with our system - and you know as States Members - we know that some of our systems are not immediately letting emails through so it has been blocked.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, that is true also.

The Minister for Children and Education:

So we are working through all these barriers so next year we do not need to send an email. It will be uploaded so it will not be stopped by the security. Currently it is an attachment in the email but next year it will be a submission through the electronic system.

Deputy B. Porée:

The next question is still about the student finance but slightly more targeted. Does the Minister know how many individual requests of review of circumstances in relation to the student grants have been put through? How many individual cases have requested a review of circumstances in relation to the student grant, so for instance if it has been rejected or if they have received less than what they would be expecting. How many of these cases have come back to you to be reviewed or asking for review?

The Minister for Children and Education:

I received, myself, I think 4 emails, which I forwarded to the officers. I spoke with officers yesterday. So we have a process and the process is that the moment this request has come in the officers go back, ask for extra communication and explain what the appeal process is. The first is going into the internal appeal. There is only one case that I know of that would progress to full appeal. So basically they need to submit their appeal and we will go the official appeal process to make the decision. We just had a conversation yesterday and I said after the public hearing today I will again forward all the emails and would like to have a full update for the emails I received. Currently, from what I understood, all people were contacted to say: "We need X, Y, Z. If you would like to take it forward we need an official decision ...". No, basically, if you would like to proceed with the appeal to the Minister, and in this case it would come in front of me and we would have the appeal. There is only one case that is thinking about appeal.

Deputy B. Porée:

You are saying just one case?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes. This is what I have been told yesterday and I am happy to ...

Deputy B. Porée:

It is still being reviewed so it has not been rejected or confirmed either?

The Minister for Children and Education:

No, it needs to come to me. First it goes into the internal appeal and I think one person said they are not happy with the internal appeal and this should be presented to me as the Minister.

Deputy B. Porée:

That is interesting. I have other ...

The Minister for Children and Education:

Let us go through the people and maybe people need better communication to explain what the appeal means. I am happy to look into this, yes.

Deputy B. Porée:

It would be nice to look into these figures again.

The Minister for Children and Education:

If you have specific people, let us take it offline because it is private, I will go through case by case and go back to the officers.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):

They have written to around 90 people following the internal appeal of which only one ...

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, but not that have progressed to the appeal. Only one progressed to the appeal.

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):

Yes, and that is quite recent.

The Minister for Children and Education:

I am talking about what I received in my inbox but probably some of them probably went direct.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I just have a question about this, which I found really concerning. The Jersey Student Loan Support Group has recently published results of their survey. I think it was actually all the parents who responded to the survey indicated, in question 7, that they were having to take on extra work, borrow money or take significant financial decisions, like remortgaging or take money from their pension, in order to support their adult child to study. Do you think that is equitable, assuming some people may not be able to do this anyway, and the ones who can are being impoverished in a way by putting their child through university?

The Minister for Children and Education:

I have received this survey and if you remember, I think, on 7th September we had meetings with yourself, the Student Finance Support Group and us. As I committed, and I am still committed, good

news will be coming in the next days, probably Monday or Tuesday, around what we discussed and following the suggestion that raised by the student finance group around children studying outside or independently. As we discussed, there are several policies that I am going to review and work on. If we are talking about the sliding scales, currently there are very harsh thresholds and if somebody earns £150 more they will lose in maintenance £2,500.

[11:15]

This is one of the reviews. I know that we talked about possible loans ... so there is a maintenance grant but it is not enough. So how are we supporting people who will not be able to access extra funding or, for example, somebody who receives the grant but does not receive any maintenance and you have middle earners working with mortgage so they are struggling. We need to go and address these groups. I will be working with the student finance group, we need to understand their terms of reference, we need to understand the representation, we need to understand exactly how we establish proper working relationship with them as partners, with yourself, with student and their parents. Those are 4 things we definitely need to look at and develop.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I think you have already covered that one, have you not?

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, 21 has been dealt with.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I wonder if we could move forward because there is a particularly important question, number 24, and then we will go back. Is that okay?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, it is.

Deputy B. Porée:

I will ask that question, if that is okay, Minister.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Sure, absolutely. Thank you.

Deputy B. Porée:

Today you have published the Town Primary School Review which details proposals for some significant capital projects, however the review also includes new details about potential costs. Can you confirm what work has been done to assess the costs of the proposed projects to date? This is in relation to the Town Primary School Review.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Okay, the primary school review, which was published, made 3 recommendations. As you can see, we do have funds allocated in the Government Plan for the capital projects going forward. As you can see it will be spread out. The first recommendation that we decided in the bridging Island Plan that we have 2-form entry, including a special education need unit at Gas Place, and the work ... my recommendation to the Council of Ministers and ambition is to start the work as Government Plan approved for 2023, to do the feasibility study, to work with ... to create design and hopefully the school will be built by 2026. The second one, it is clear for us that we need a replacement for Rouge Bouillon. If you would go to the report and you see the catchment area and walking distance, because for us it is really important that schools will be where children live and it will be between 5 and 10 minutes walking distance. This is the reason. If you look at ... it is page 11, basically between Rouge Bouillon roundabout and Castle Quay, this area, we need 3-form entry because of the developments, because of the locations. The report looks into the catchment areas and looks to where the locations can be. There is active engagement with various stakeholders now and I would hopefully confirm beginning in 2023. Because we need to build one school first to make sure that it is moving enough to start the second big project. I hope this school will be completed by 2027-2028 and, again, plans are in place for a school. On top of this we had more development around I would say the eastern part of St. Helier, western part of St. Saviour, kind of eastern, south-western and this is the reason that we are suggesting that we need extra form entry at Plat Douet and they have a space to be able to have extra form entry to Plat Douet. We know the population of town has grown and we have more development, especially around central and south areas. What is really important for me to emphasise, the balance between development, major infrastructure and green spaces is at the front of my mind. We have Millennium Park and it will be safe walking and safe cycling and a green space area. How can we maximise the area of ... if you are thinking about school as a community that during the school times it is used by the school children and it is all safe, but outside of school it can benefit all the community in densely populated areas on top of creating parks. For example, we assume that the Springfield School will go into Gas Place but you have the Springfield School area and I personally would like to see a dedicated park with all equipment for early years and children with disabilities. So you have a different type of pocket park, a bit out from the big girls and boys, dedicated for early years. It is just an idea. We will do consultations but we must make sure that we have balance. Thank you for the question.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Could I just ask a supplementary, Minister?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, sure.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Currently Rouge Bouillon, which we will be visiting this afternoon, is that a 3-form entry at the moment?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Two.

The Connétable of Grouville:

It is 2 so that is quite a commitment.

The Minister for Children and Education:

We need 3. We see how many children live in the area, this is where we need to provide them spaces for school.

The Connétable of Grouville:

It is a big school.

Deputy B. Porée:

Okay, so thank you for that. With regards again to Rouge Bouillon School, can you please describe how you are taking the process forward for the next 3 months on the plans for the Rouge Bouillon School? Do you have an immediate plan for the next 3 months?

The Minister for Children and Education:

First of all, we have to do maintenance for Rouge Bouillon School. We need to make sure that Rouge Bouillon's fire safety, there is all clean painted equipment because it will take time, 2027-2028, it is 6 years away. For the next 3 months we have several meetings in place. I am not sure if it came to your attention because it was probably a different Scrutiny Panel that we have a ministerial group for future places in our group as well. So there is a Future Places Ministerial Group replaces the Regeneration Ministerial Group because we must work with stakeholders in the Government and outside. We must work with all this area and there is some stuff that needs to be discussed before we can make an announcement. Because this report is actually saying what I found was done in 18 months, because I put it into a full report and full review. I had tried to get this review since March 2021 and I was waiting for this review to be published in May 2021 and June

2021 before I lodged the proposition in July 2021. For me this is what is there but more work needs to be done on how we make sure it is ... Seán, you would like to add something?

Group Director, Education:

If it is helpful, Minister, Deputy Porée raised a very important question about Rouge Bouillon School and, as the Minister has alluded, we have been working for quite a number of years directly with the headteacher and the local community on the school. Your original question about how much it would cost, there was provisional money in the 2022-2025 Government Plan of £25 million phased over 3 years for a north of town primary and a south of town primary, but they were just working titles. It is around a community of schools because the Minister has embraced that. In the town estate we have at least 3 schools that are old and in poor repair so it is getting all these moving parts right. But at the moment it is ongoing work around site selection for Rouge Bouillon but the commitment ... and Ministers met with all the headteachers affected by this and we have met individually with the teachers in this plan this week. We will be doing significant investment in the school while Rouge Bouillon stays where it is, looking forward to its new home.

The Minister for Children and Education:

At the end of the day, my proposition is still valid. My proposition that no government sites will be developed until we have a site for the replacement of Rouge Bouillon School. For me it is very, very clear that within 3, 4 months we will know, the beginning of 2023.

Deputy B. Porée:

With regards to the Plat Douet extension, do you a timeframe for the work?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, we will do the feasibility study next year.

Deputy B. Porée:

Next year?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, the feasibility study will start, yes.

Deputy B. Porée:

Beginning of next year.

The Minister for Children and Education:

No, it will take time ... it takes time. Probably a year for the feasibility, design and planning permission, because we still have to have planning permission. We can still have objections in the planning permission because whatever we develop the planning can overturn. I would say it takes between a year to a year and a half before you actually put your spade in the ground and start to build.

Group Director, Education:

So the Minister's report gives an illustration of what it might look like - that is the commitment - but that drawing is just a drawing. It is not pre-feasibility. The work would need to be done and the costings.

Deputy B. Porée:

More related to the timescales?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes.

Deputy B. Porée:

Thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I have a very specific question, which should be fairly simple to answer. In future, will schools that create artificial grass pitches be required to provide a counterbalance wild or garden space?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Okay, good question. Tell you what, it is not with me. I am waiting for the report from the Minister for the Environment, Deputy Jonathan Renouf . He has told me that very soon he will come back to me and give an assessment whether we will continue with 3G and if we are continuing with 3G what requirements we need to put in place. It is a good idea.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is a very good idea.

The Minister for Children and Education:

It is a brilliant idea. I do not know what he will say. He might come back and say: "No." Because it was raised on social media and I did not find any policy that was developed as to why we are doing 3G, we all started to question it. But general feedback I have had from the headteachers is they are

very, very happy because the children can be active through the year. I like the idea and I am definitely taking it forward. Thank you.

Deputy B. Porée:

Again, this is with regards to new developments for schools, especially in St. Helier. One of your Ministerial priorities is about recognising that all children need regular and frequent access to green spaces and nature. Could you please advise what sort of opportunities you are exploring to increase the access for children in more urban areas?

The Minister for Children and Education:

I think that is a very important question. There are coming of things going on and I am sure that we will continue to explore. First Tower School, we are in discussion and the plans hopefully will go forward that we will have playing fields and a forest school. The Tower Road field is ... I have seen the pre-feasibility and we are in discussion about purchasing the field. The plans for that field and outside area, playing area and forest school was developed together with the children and teachers at First Tower School. This is one of the things that will completely change that part of the plan. On top of that I am in conversation with providers, and I have several organisations approach me, and the first pilot will be in January when children will be provided with the bus and taken out to St. Ouen and St. Mary where they will have outside extra activities through the day so they can connect to nature. I am in conversation ... I have a meeting next week with the community project GROW field, where they are building back ... together grow. We are now having a meeting at Education on how we can embed GROW activities in our education. Obviously the town schools will be the first takers of activities.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I will just say we are coming to the end now and we still have some questions, are you able to stay another 10 to 15 minutes or ...

The Minister for Children and Education:

I have a meeting at quarter to. I can stay another couple of minutes but you can ask the questions and we will follow up ...

Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):

We can respond in writing.

The Minister for Children and Education:

We also can respond in writing. Just because I have a meeting at quarter to and I need to go.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Shall we carry on with one more question? I think that is yours.

Deputy B. Porée:

I have a question about Les Quennevais School. Could the Minister please provide an update on the maintenance and installation works that were underway at Les Quennevais School?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes. I am glad to confirm that upgrading of this ... although they have ventilation nobody thought about air-conditioning and we need to ensure that any new school, any new development and any extension has air-conditioning. First of all, I am very grateful ... I have worked a lot with the Minister for Infrastructure. The second stage was completed before the new academic year and we added 24 air-conditioned rooms. Now we have money in the Government Plan and it is under development and we are identifying the next set of 19 rooms.

[11:30]

We previously had some of the rooms, which worked. It was phased for 24 rooms and we have 19 rooms which we are required to upgrade going forward and it will be done in the next year. Saying this, I am completely aware about the difficulties across the school estate. Interestingly enough, all the old buildings were coping better with the hot weather than the brand new ones so we get to ensure ... it is about their ventilation system was through the big doors and windows. We are reviewing all the estate and we are looking into the shades in the playground. These shades can actually be used during the winter because children can play without being in the rain and also can be used during the summer to have outside activities. Some of the shades can be create natural, so we are looking not just to put artificial ones. Where we can use this space to minimise the artificial ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Tree planting and so on?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes, but tree planting takes time. But there are some places that have trees but they are not used enough. You can create the areas, yes, definitely. Thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Do we have time for one more?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Yes.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Can we move on to the school meals programme, Minister? What is the progress on that?

The Minister for Children and Education:

The progress on that is that we secured £1.6 million hopefully, it depends on the Assembly and yourselves voting in the Assembly in December. I am not sure if we all realised how ambitious a plan it was.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Complicated.

The Minister for Children and Education:

We need to upgrade from just under 500 meals a day that are delivered currently to more than 4,000 meals a day. It is not 200,000 as has been proposed before, 300,000. Now, if we need to deliver 4,000 meals a day ... there is a tender process in place, we are in the middle of it so I cannot speak about the details but we have definitely secured this funding which will require upgrading kitchen facilities. It is more than double what the current hospital deliver, so this is the scale. I am completely, completely convinced that this is the way forward and quicker is better. At the same time we need to put it right and make sure it is sustainable. I went to visit Janvrin School to see how it works, what is happening. They have roast dinner. You see some of them eat broccoli, some of them do not eat broccoli, some of them eat beef, you know, it is children. We need to see how we are making sure ... that they all wanted hamburgers and chips. It was a very interesting conversation but we are definitely progressing in it.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay, that is wonderful, thank you for your commitment, Minister. Any supplementaries we can take at this time? What are your thoughts on the implementation of this? Is there a timescale that you have put in place for the implementation of the school meals?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Some of the schools will be in 2023, some of the schools will be in 2024. The moment that funding is confirmed we need to put the logistics in place and make sure it is working because we want to include all schools.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Does it include secondary schools?

The Minister for Children and Education:

Secondary schools have their own food. All secondary schools already have facilities.

Deputy B. Porée:

Jersey Pottery.

Group Director, Education:

No, no longer, they were the providers with Capsicum, as in Jersey Pottery. They ceased 3 years ago so a subsidiary commercial arm of the charity Caring Cooks provides school meals, but some do it in-house.

The Minister for Children and Education:

So basically by the end of 2024, beginning of 2025, hopefully all 4,000 meals can be delivered because just under 500 to 4,000 is a big jump that we need to put in place logistically.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Indeed, thank you, Minister.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, so I would like to thank you all for answering most of our questions, the ones we did manage to ask, and we will send the remaining questions.

The Minister for Children and Education:

Thank you for your suggestions, we will definitely work on it and will report back. In the meantime, please send us written questions, if you have them.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you very much.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you.

[11:35]