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Deputy Rob Ward
Chair
Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

By email only

10 March 2022

Dear Chair,

Quarterly Hearing with the Minister for Children and Education – Written Questions

Thank you for your letter of 3rd March with a list of follow up questions from the Quarterly Hearing held on 14th February 2022. Please see the below responses and do not hesitate to contact me again if you require any further information.

Bullying Policy in Schools

As shared in the Scrutiny Hearing of 14th February, all schools have the support of the Department through the shared Counter-Bullying Policy for their own work, and training for staff groups from the Education Psychology team. To date, 63% of all schools in Jersey, primary and secondary, have had bespoke training in the new Counter bullying approach recommendations. The support available to children and young people who are victims of bullying is shared through this training:

- i. with children and young people through Assemblies and in-class activities, including through PSHE lessons
- ii. with staff (teachers and support staff) through staff training, and
- iii. with parents and carers through an evening session with the Educational Psychologist who designed the new counter-bullying approach
- iv. creating a culture that gives children and young people the skills and confidence to respond appropriately both to their peers and to adults.

The Policy is clear that support is given to both the victims and perpetrators of bullying behaviour.

Schools use a range of methods to address bullying within schools including restorative practice, and the use of social stories. These put incidents into context and preventative measures through awareness in the PSHE curriculum. Each incident needs to be looked at individually and within its own context to ensure that those involved understand the consequences of their actions and don't repeat the behaviours involved. Incidents are logged and if any form of pattern is established with a child or groups of children, senior leaders are expected to respond within the published guidelines of the Counter-Bullying Policy and apply the appropriate sanctions. Such steps would include working with the pupils and students involved and all parents/carers connected to the issue.

In Primary schools, victims of bullying are supported by staff throughout the school day and across environments as a result of good communication systems regarding incidents and close liaison with parents and carers.

School assemblies highlight issues in both phases and can act as a deterrent to undesirable behaviour; these promote community, values and a positive, supportive school ethos, which in turn brings greater safety to victims.

Staff trained as ELSAs offer professional emotional learning support to pupils who have experienced bullying in primary and school-based counselling teams are available in secondary schools. The online provision of Kooth offers a safe place for students to talk openly and connect with others online, Childline call numbers are well publicised in schools via posters and the YES Project (Youth Service) is also there to engage and support. CEOPs (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) buttons are available on school computers and websites for any online bullying and school Community Liaison Officers from the Police also run a set of Year 6 sessions promoting online safety (including issues around online bullying). These are also available to secondary schools.

One example of innovation in restorative practice is that Grouville School are piloting a peer mediation approach in partnership with the Resolution Centre. The findings of this pilot will be considered by the Department to evaluate its value and the potential for roll out to other schools.

Covid-19 Response

1. What discussions have you had with the private nursery providers about the impact of the pandemic on both their businesses and ability to provide a safe and effective space for children to learn and develop?

During the pandemic we conducted a survey with all childcare providers, their families to gain a thorough understanding of the impacts being felt by both the providers and their service users. We also took the time to gain feedback from children in our registered settings about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings so that nurseries were able to better understand and respond to children's needs.

Allowing nurseries to run with room bubbles meant that children were experiencing as near to normal a day as possible, crucial for young children's well-being. We held regular contacts with settings to enable them to network, share resources and support each other through the challenges of the pandemic. Additional financial support was secured for those settings that remained open for children of essential workers and the range of business support measures, including access to co-funded payroll scheme was available for this sector. The Education department was on hand to meet with individual settings and respond to concerns immediately to ensure that continuity of safe and high-quality care remained our priority.

2. One area of research that has been undertaken during the pandemic has noted the serious risks faced by pre-school children in their development as a result. What are you doing to ensure that children affected in this stage of their development are provided with as much support as possible to ensure they do not fall behind when entering school?

Achieved so far:

Jan 2022 continuation of our evidenced based programmes including Making it REAL and Wellcomm training to support children's communication and language development. This will also include a focus on children who are multilingual learners, recognising that their development will be supported to be in line with their peers.

The Best Start Nursery Plus scheme currently providing funded hours of childcare for 2–3-year-olds identified as at risk of disadvantage has been extended to 20 additional families identified and funds transferred to private nurseries to deliver this care and progress will be tracked regularly.

Next Steps:

Recruitment of a Best Start Co-ordinator to ensure the effective implementation of all planned elements of the covid recovery projects and Best Start programme and to co-ordinate the integration of services to better support family access to core services. This will ensure that children gain the right help at the right time to support both universal and targeted access to services and support through early identification and intervention.

A targeted training plan for the rest of 2022 and 2023 will see professional development courses made widely available to the children's workforce which includes coaching and mentoring, higher level childcare qualifications, health and education joint training initiatives and leadership and management support for SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) in private nurseries.

An app aimed at families '50 Things to do before you are 5' will be launched on 9 April that will support parents in accessing low cost / no cost activities locally that will support them to support their child's development.

A strong focus on nurturing children's well-being and taking the time to embed the three prime areas of learning in the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) has been the focus for schools and nurseries. This is to ensure that children have the foundations embedded and dispositions needed to continue learning, for example confidence, resilience, and security.

Post-16 Strategy

3. The Panel notes that this strategy was being rolled out prior to the pandemic, however, there has been little communication or information in relation to it since. Does the strategy still stand and, if so, how are you ensuring it is funded effectively so that it can be delivered?

The strategy still stands and is being funded effectively through CYPES budgets and additional monies targeted through the pandemic response. I would be happy to arrange a briefing for the Panel to receive a more detailed update on progress if that is helpful?

4. What lessons, if any, have been learned from the development of T-Level Courses in the United Kingdom and is Jersey giving any consideration to them?

The new programmes aim to ensure technical education achieves equal status to A-levels. The programmes offer enhanced work-based opportunities and consist of three key elements within 1,800 hours of funded activity over a two-year period.

- Technical Qualification - the main classroom-based element part of a T Level where students will learn about their chosen sectors.
- Industry Placement – which runs for at least 45 days and will give students practical insights into their sector.
- English, maths & digital provision – this is built into the classroom-based element of the T Level and is there to ensure students have these transferable skills.

However, it is early days for the programmes, and it is unclear on their longer term impact, particularly upon: -

- Will T-levels limit the social mobility of those students from disadvantaged backgrounds? Research has proven that BTECs are very effective at achieving social mobility.
- What safety net will be in place for those students who do not achieve or cannot achieve all components? Currently students who leave with partial completion will have zero accreditation. Current qualifications provide step off opportunities, including A-Levels where students achieve between 1 and 3 usually.
- Will entry requirements result in students needing to remain in education for a further year to prepare for access and what would be the impact of this?
- Universities are not fully recognising T-Levels yet, which is another risk to student progression.

Jersey's economy also does not mirror that of England and as such the T-levels do not transport easily in terms of curriculum content and industrial placements. Of the current suite the closest match would be the T-level in Finance. However, again it is unclear as to whether employers would be willing and/or able to provide sustained placement opportunities to 16–17-year-old learners.

In England, T-level development substantial funding has been issued to providers to transition to T-levels which would also be required on Island. Even so, 9/10 T-Level providers have missed their recruitment targets in England; particularly in Health Studies and Digital which were the least appealing to students. Furthermore, FE Colleges are deferring placements of 315 hours because employers cannot support them.

The T-Level in Construction has been the most successful, however we already have partnered with Hautlieu, the Construction Council and ROK Construction to deliver DEC! as an exemplar provision in STEM.

In November 2021, the Principal confirmed T-Levels are not on offer outside England until after 2023. The Senior Policy Manager of FE in the UK confirmed this, at the Association of Colleges. She has assured the Principal, that should they become available, the DFE will contact CYPES' curriculum lead officer.

In conclusion, Jersey's current Skills provision remains fit for purpose across A-levels, Professional, Technical and Future Skills qualifications.

It would be prudent to observe the roll out and evaluation of T-Level programmes as options for the future. However, currently the unknowns, costs and risks outweigh the benefits of pursuing local adoption without first seeing the impact of the qualifications in England. Should Jersey wish to pursue skills reform, England and by extension T-levels, should not be the only model under consideration.

Study on Synthetic Phonics

- 5. The Panel notes a recent study from University College London which has found that the way primary school pupils are taught to read in England as “uninformed and failing children”, calling on the government to drop its narrow focus on phonics. Can you confirm what standardised assessments of children's reading are carried out in Jersey?**

Schools in England have recently adopted an approach to reading which has a very strong emphasis on the use of specified synthetic phonic schemes. The UCL research (Wyse and Bradbury) argues that this approach is too narrow and, 'should more closely reflect the evidence that contextualised teaching of reading, or balanced instruction, is the most effective way to teach reading.'

Since the introduction of the English policy, advice to Jersey schools has been to continue to adopt a balanced approach to the teaching of reading. The systematic teaching of phonics in Foundation stage and KS1 is a key component in the teaching of early reading but the following teaching and learning strategies are also included:

- Guided Reading in groups to include discussion, clarification of vocabulary and comprehension
- Opportunities to read individually, in pairs and with an adult
- Reading quality texts to children daily
- Opportunities to read aloud and perform to develop fluency and expression.

Pupils who are experiencing literacy difficulties have access to a range of specific, evidence-based interventions which are bespoke to individual need. Examples of these include Reading Recovery (KS1), Reading Fluency Project (KS2).

Every Child Our Future (ECOF) supports pupils with further practice in reading. Volunteers receive training to help pupils use a range of reading strategies.

6. Can you please provide the Panel with a full list of all standardised assessments that are carried out for children, aged 0 – 18.

- PIRA/PUMA tests Y2-5 this year (Through the JTP Covid-19 Education Recovery Programme)
- Cognitive Abilities Tests (September Y6 and Y9)
- KS2 tests 2022 (Y6 – May 2022)
- Progress Tests in maths and English (Y9)
- GCSEs, VTQs and other L2 Qualifications (Y10/11)
- A-Levels, IB, VTQs and other L3 Qualifications (Y12/13)

7. Are parents notified of all the assessments that are undertaken on their children?

Schools communicate with parents regarding the assessments taking place in their school. It is at the discretion of the schools whether scores for individual assessments are provided. All parents are entitled to the scores pupils receive in all assessments they take, so parents can request these (if schools do not send these out) and schools must provide them.

8. Can you please outline how the curriculum council operates, and what evidence and research does it consider in relation to literacy?

The Jersey Curriculum Council is required under the Education (Jersey) Law (1999) to conduct consultation on the aims, objectives, content, delivery and assessment of the Jersey Curriculum.

The Jersey Curriculum determines what pupils are expected to know, apply and understand in terms of the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study of each subject.

Standardised assessments lie outside of the Jersey Curriculum. The general business of the Council relates to the formative and summative non-standardised assessment of the programmes of study.

Separate consultations regarding standardised assessments take place between the relevant officers, schools and the Minister.

Evidence and research are consistently reviewed by the officer responsible for the English Curriculum. Sources are varied but may include the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), reports commissioned by Ofsted, UCL or other research papers, published books, or articles from the DfE. Any evidence is largely research-based.

9. Is it intended for the council to review this new research?

Any research taken to the Council is evaluated initially by the Adviser for English and lead teachers, to determine relevance against current practice and any benefits from improving the service. Subsequently this is then shared via the School Improvement and Advisory Team meetings for an opinion/to inform before being considered for the Curriculum Council. There have been no submissions to Curriculum Council in the last 12 months because the research (for example the UCL paper) would not improve on the current, well-rounded provision in place.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

10. What involvement/information have you had/received in relation to the development of workforce planning as per the response to recommendation eight of the Panel's report?

As a member of the Council of Ministers I am made aware of significant policy changes relating to staff via briefings supplied on behalf of SEB. I am also kept up to date with more operational workforce issues via my weekly Ministerial meetings and 1:1 meeting with the Director General CYPES and Group Director for education.

11. Minister, what has been done to increase business support to schools since the Panel's report was presented?

The focus has been on establishing how to improve the non-teaching processes undertaken in schools through a review of operational activity. This will result in a change to recruitment processes (one of the school's priority areas for improvement) in March 2022.

There are also plans to establish a continuous improvement capability to progress this work on a sustained basis.

The school funding formula has also established some support roles in base funding where appropriate.

Early Years

12. Can you confirm the current spend to date for 2022 in relation to the Nursery Education Fund?

£920,273.48 to the end of February 2022.

13. How does this compare to the available budget for 2022? (As per Gov Plan report, the budget for Early Years is £1.27 million for 2022).

The total available budget for the Nursery Education Fund (NEF) for 2022 is £3,050,000. This includes the growth element of £1,277,000. Payments are made termly.

The forecast for 2022 is currently breakeven. The forecast is based on the numbers of children accessing the NEF and the hours claimed per child. It will be adjusted during the year to reflect variations in demand.

14. What progress has been made to develop the action plan in relation to the recommendations of the Early Years Policy Development Board (EYPDB)?

Significant progress has been made establishing a change programme in Early Years which had incorporated the recommendations of the EYPDB. A full briefing on this programme will be provided by the end of March as committed during the Government Plan Review process.

Yours sincerely,



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Minister for Children and Education

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