

19-21 Broad Street | St Helier  
Jersey | JE2 3RR

Deputy Catherine Curtis  
Chair, Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

**BY EMAIL**

9<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Dear Chair,

**Follow-up matters from the Public Hearing of 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Thank you for your letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> October requesting information further to the recent public hearing. Please see the below as requested and do not hesitate to contact me again if you require anything further.

**Considering the training and resources available for Jersey students with dyslexia, for example the online resources from “Made by Dyslexia”, as one example. The Panel would be interested to discuss this subject with you further in future.**

I would be happy to discuss this further with the Panel and will ensure that the relevant officers with expertise in this area are available to answer the Panel questions.

**Sharing details of GCSE language exam results with the Panel, broken down by school.**

The table below provides provisional results for 2023. Final results will be available in the spring term following the completion of the appeals process. We have summarised the results by school for disclosure control purposes.

The languages taken by pupils this summer include Mandarin, French, Italian, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish.

<b>School</b>	<b>Number of language exams</b>	<b>Standard pass</b>	<b>Strong pass</b>	<b>% standard pass</b>	<b>% strong pass</b>
Grainville	61	48	39	78.7%	63.9%
Haute Vallée	52	45	42	86.5%	80.8%
Hautlieu	103	89	74	86.4%	71.8%
Jersey College for Girls	104	97	87	93.3%	83.7%
Le Rocquier	77	62	54	80.5%	70.1%
Les Quennevais	67	59	48	88.1%	71.6%
Victoria College	80	63	49	78.8%	61.3%

**Provide data and / or further details about the financial support overseen by the Education welfare service in relation to assisting with the costs of school uniforms.**

Details of 'help with school uniform costs' are on the gov.je website which families can access. [Help with school uniform costs \(gov.je\)](#)

For families with secondary school aged children attending Grainville, Haute Vallee, Le Rocquier or Les Quennevais, the Education Welfare Officer based in the school may be able to assist a family with essential items of secondary school uniform and school shoes, including essential PE kit. However, funding for trainers and tracksuit is not given.

An application form (which can be requested from the school) should be completed by the parent detailing the items required, giving evidence of the family's income (income also means any form of subsidy and Income Support; a copy of the family's award letter from Income Support should also be included) and returned to the Education Welfare Officer at the child's school. The request will be considered and, if approved, vouchers will be provided to the parent.

If a child attends a secondary school not mentioned above, an application can be made to the Education Welfare Team who may be able to assist (following the same steps as detailed above). The request will be considered by the budget holder and, if approved, vouchers will be provided to the parent.

**Regarding the various childcare courses offered at Highlands College, confirmation of:**

**How many spaces there are each year for new entrants?;**

Highlands College would have the most accurate information to answer this question and as advised during the public hearing, I have requested this information, but am unable to obtain it at the current time due to industrial action. The Childcare and Early Years Service (CEYS) in my department have advised that the College have responded to demand and doubled the intake on some courses.

**What percentage of people completing the childcare courses at Highlands go on to work, in the Early Years sector?**

Highlands College would have the most accurate information to answer this question and as advised during the public hearing, I have requested this information, but am unable to obtain it at the current time due to industrial action. The Childcare and Early Years Service (CEYS) in my department have advised that over 60% of students who qualified this year at Level 3 have entered the Early Years work sector, others are moving on to further study and a number are considering roles as childminders.

**Additionally, the Panel was offered a tour of Mont à L'Abbé school once the extension is complete in December. We would like to accept this offer and would be grateful if arrangements could be made through the Panel's officer for this, in due course.**

I would be very happy to help facilitate this visit to Mont à L'Abbé school. My Private Office will be able to provide the relevant contact details and put the Panel's Officer in touch with the school to enable this visit to be arranged.

## Teaching strikes

**Minister, with regards to the recent teachers strikes, there were some reports that the Government had reneged on an agreement to make a backdated pay award of 7.9% for 2023. Are you able to provide the Panel with details about that situation?**

This was not the case, and it was accepted by all parties that the provision of 7.9 per cent back pay was conditional on the strike days being suspended.

The States Employment Board (SEB) paid the 7.9% pay award in good faith in the August payroll, however the 7.9% backdating was subject to the condition which was not met.

Again, in good faith, the States Employment Board paid the 7.9% backdated element in September 2023 pay packets to seek to avert the strike day and the disruption to education and families.

Teachers have now had an uplift of 7.9%, in line with the rest of the public service, since January 2023. The unions remain in dispute for the 2023 award.

Additionally, an improved offer to headteachers was made on the eve of strike action which was rejected by school leaders.

**Please could you detail what discussions have you had with both the Teaching Unions and the States Employment Board about the ongoing dispute?**

The Teaching Unions contacted me by email on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2023 requesting a meeting to discuss a paper for inclusion in the Government Plan to be received by me, expressing the view that more funding needs to be put into the Government Plan for salaries for Teachers. I responded two days later advising that I would be happy to set up a meeting at the earliest opportunity once I had received the paper to be discussed.

During the last strike day, Deputy Doublet and I listened to the speeches given in the Royal Square. We also spoke with Union representatives and reminded them of my commitment to meet and the need for the briefing paper ahead of this. I received the paper on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> October, and will be scheduling a meeting with the Unions in the near future to discuss their paper.

I met with leaders of both teaching Unions and the NAHT alongside SEB Ministerial colleagues soon after coming into office. WQ343 response below provide additional information.

[wq.343-2023.pdf \(gov.je\)](#)

CYPES officers alongside colleagues from People and Corporate Services have also held meetings on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of September with local and national Union representatives to discuss terms and conditions.

As Minister, I am responsible for education policy. Clearly, the on-going dispute impacts on the ability to deliver our policies and improvement in education.

I meet regularly with teaching representatives and leaders to discuss the development of educational policy, and we have a long-standing good relationship with teachers informing and developing policy. I have met termly with all Head Teachers since coming into office and we have very valuable discussions about a wide range of education policies, challenges and opportunities.

As a member of the Council of Ministers, I am kept informed about the progress of negotiations with pay groups. Schools have civil service, manual worker and workforce modernisation pay groups in addition to the teachers and school leaders pay groups.

Whilst I encourage a negotiated settlement with all unions, the current dispute requires third party intervention.

I am supportive of the States Employment Board's efforts to seek binding arbitration and I encourage the teaching unions to enter these discussions. I am briefed that there are now no other routes to resolution other than binding arbitration, with negotiation, mediation and conciliation now exhausted.

Ultimately, it is for the States Employment Board to set the pay levels, within the limits provided by the States Assembly through the Government Plan.

**In the United Kingdom there is an independent body [the School Teachers' Review Body] who examine the pay and employment conditions of teachers and they report and make recommendations to the Secretary of State for Education and the Prime Minister. In Jersey, the negotiation and decision-making process sits directly with the States Employment Board (as employer). You, as Minister with responsibility for Education, appear to be removed from that process.**

**What do you think about the structure in place in Jersey?**

The States Employment Board is responsible for pay and conditions, as set out in legislation. It is difficult as the pay groups across the Island are quite small for independent review boards and external structures.

As Minister, I am responsible for education policy. The delivery of that policy is the responsibility of officers and those within schools. Within schools and the wider CYPES portfolio we have teachers, school leaders, manual workers, and civil servants. Parity between the groups is important and pay in education should respect that there is a team of people from different pay groups.

I would welcome a pay strategy, linked to education policy objectives, that rewards improvements and does not just focus solely on pay issues. Our overall offer for pay, terms and conditions, working conditions, pensions and other benefits should be considered in the round. This may help avoid single issues of dispute around pay.

I welcome the approach to seeking multi-year negotiations to avoid annual disputes.

**Do you think that the structure in Jersey is optimum?**

My observations about the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB), is that it covers significantly more employees than we have in Jersey. The context in the UK is different.

However, the STRB report does provide useful, contextual information that we may consider publishing from the SEB. The recent disagreements over certain information and data could be independently verified by Statistics Jersey and informed by our unique economic situation.

It should be noted, that the STRB recommendations in the UK have frequently fallen below inflation, despite the greater challenges for recruitment and retention. Jersey does not have the same, acute problems and we are very much in more control of our teaching pipeline locally than the UK is.

Ultimately, the local situation must be negotiated locally and not taking a lead from the UK.

## **Are there any learnings that could be taken from other jurisdictions?**

This is complicated, but in short, we should be looking to compare to similar sized jurisdictions and not the UK to assess and compare. Aspect to consider beyond pay is the performance of our education attainments in relation to teacher pay across similar jurisdictions, as well as per pupil funding. Education is a whole-system and not just a single factor, such as pay.

I have welcomed the joint approach by the SEB, CYPES, school leaders and teaching unions to work jointly on reforming terms and conditions.

## **Safe recruitment**

**Thank you for your response to the Panel's letter on 29th August 2023 in relation to safe recruitment. It referenced that a new safeguarding checking service (Procius) and procedure was introduced in 2022. What feedback have you received about this process so far?**

Improvements have been made around the timescales involved in pre-employment clearances which had previously caused issues around start dates, particularly for schools at the beginning of the academic year. Steps have been taken to streamline the pre-employment checks process to minimise any unnecessary delays, recognising that time is of the essence for both applicants and our schools and services.

The new checking service has been able to expedite the screening process without compromising its thoroughness. This has resulted in positive feedback from recruitment managers. The recruitment team also identified improvements that need to be made to the period of time a reference covered, in line with UK best practice. These improvements have now been implemented.

**It was noted that the safe recruitment policy was last reviewed substantively in 2017 and was due to be updated. Why was this policy not updated at the same time as the updates to the safeguarding checking processes?**

Proteus carry out the same Disclosure and Barring Checks as stated in the safe recruitment policy and safeguarding checking process. These checks have not changed and are as per below list:

- A basic check, which shows unspent convictions and conditional cautions
- A standard check, which shows spent and unspent convictions and cautions
- An enhanced check plus whether the applicant is on the list of people barred from doing the role

The policy will be reviewed fully as a 'suite' of policies including:

Safe Recruitment, Recruitment Policy, Relocation Policy

These policies, guidelines and associated toolkits will be reviewed together in line with current best practice and best fit to future proof, develop and reflect on feedback to apply this learning.

## Vapes

**Minister, please could you advise what discussions have taken place between CYPES and Public Health regarding informing young people about vapes and possible health or environmental risks associated with their use?**

I have discussed vapes with the Minister for Health and Social Services, Public Health and the Council of Ministers. I am aware that the Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for Environment recently issued a press release expressing their wish to move towards a ban on the sale of disposable vapes in Jersey, for both environmental and health-related reasons. The proposed ban will be subject confirming to consultation with stakeholders.

I am concerned about the use of vapes by children and young people and Hautlieu Student Council have raised their concerns with me. Public Health will be involved, alongside other key stakeholders in the co-design of any changes to be brought forward.

### **a. What work is planned on this for the future?**

Public Health and CYPES have been liaising and a session at CYPES Senior Leadership Team involving both Public Health and Hautlieu Student Council is planned in the coming weeks. This will discuss and agree a work programme to reduce the up-take and use of e-cigarettes and vapes amongst children and young people.

## Translation services

**The Panel has heard feedback that schools are able to send out communications and surveys to parents in languages other than English, but that the schools don't always have the necessary support or budget to translate any responses received.**

The following communication was sent by the Multilingual Learner (MLL) Advisory Service to schools in September 2023:

We have been looking at how we can integrate the use of technology to improve communications for those new to English and for MLL learners, both during the school admission process and in the classroom. [DeepL](#) is a translating app which is widely regarded and comes highly recommended from our EAL consultant, Dr Crisfield.

There is a free version available for us in Jersey. When installed on a tablet it can translate speech or written texts into 31 different languages and the audio feature allows pupils to hear the language spoken with accurate pronunciation.

Google translate is also useful where information is given in the home language e.g. surveys. There are many languages included in its repertoire and it is becoming increasingly accurate.

If you elect to use the DeepL app on your own school devices, you will need to submit your own Data Privacy Impact Assessment (DPIA). To speed up the process, you may use the information on the MLL Advisory Service DPIA. Please do get in touch and we will support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Inna', followed by a horizontal dash.

Deputy Inna Gardiner  
Minister for Children and Education