

# STATES OF JERSEY

## Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

### School Starting Age

**MONDAY, 21st MARCH 2016**

**Panel:**

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour (Chairman)  
Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour (Vice-Chairman)  
Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. John  
Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier  
Professor E. Wood (Panel Adviser)

**Witnesses:**

The Minister for Education  
Chief Education Officer  
Principal Educational Psychologist  
Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support  
Director, Policy and Planning

[10:06]

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet (Chairman):**

Let us begin. Welcome, everybody. Thank you all for coming today and good morning to you, members of the public, media. I think we have got some people from the Department for Education over there. It is very nice to see you all in the public gallery there. This morning we will be questioning the Minister for Education on his policies around school starting age. Could I just point out the Scrutiny code, which is here, hopefully you can see it, and please turn off your mobile phones before we begin. So, we are the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. I am Deputy Louise Doublet; I am Deputy for St. Saviour 2. I am the Chair of the panel. I will let everybody introduce themselves, but if we could please start with our guest expert in the area of Early Years education, who we are very lucky has been assisting us with this review?

**Professor E. Wood (Panel Adviser):**

I am Professor Elizabeth Wood. I am from the University of Sheffield in England and my area of specialism is early childhood education.

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

Good morning, everyone. I am the Vice-Chair of the panel, Deputy Jeremy Maçon of St. Saviour, District Petite Longueville.

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier:**

Deputy Sam Mézec from St. Helier No. 2.

**Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. John:**

Tracey Vallois, Deputy of St. John.

**Scrutiny Officer:**

Mick Robbins, Scrutiny Officer.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Minister, if you could introduce yourself and your staff, please?

**The Minister for Education:**

Certainly. Good morning. I am Deputy Rod Bryans for St. Helier No. 2, the Minister for Education.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

Good morning. I am Julian Radcliffe, Principal Educational Psychologist.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Justin Donovan, Chief Education Officer.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Keith Posner, Director of Policy and Planning at the Department.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

Cliff Chipperfield, Director, Inclusion and Family Support.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Lovely. Okay, as the Minister mentioned, we did talk about this last time, we are going to build in a short comfort break in the middle, because we have got just under 2 hours now, so partly for a comfort break, but also the panel have decided we would like to have a bit of a chat at that time, so we will clear the room when we have that short break for 5 or 10 minutes. I will aim for about halfway through, to two-thirds of the way through, but I am going to judge it by the questions we get through. Do wave, if anybody is desperate to have a break. Okay, so as always, please, answers as succinct as possible and we do like to hear from the Minister where possible, but appreciate that expertise of his staff will be called upon at times. Minister, can I just ask if you have read and understood the statement in front of you, please?

**The Minister for Education:**

I have indeed.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Fantastic, and you have the topics in front of you that we will be covering today?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, so we are going to start with the legislation and we are looking at the Education (Jersey) Law; it is Article 2. The 1999 law prescribes that: "A child is of compulsory school age throughout the period beginning on the first day of the school term in which the child's fifth birthday falls, and ending on 30th June in the school year in which the child attains the age of 16 years." In practice, Minister, how are you administering this Article?

**The Minister for Education:**

Okay. I think you will have already got the copy of the policy for Children Placed out of Chronological Year, which is available to anybody who is querying this. Just to explain why I have so many people around me today, it is because these are the frontline guys that deal with that in context. Generally what we get, because the numbers are so few, is that they will contact the Education Department, my colleague who is sitting within the audience there, and then through that contact they are quite often referred to my colleague on my right, the Principal Educational Psychologist, Julian Radcliffe, who informs them generally at that point in time to go and have a look at the schools and to talk to the heads and the staff so that they fully understand and appreciate what the situation is. Julian, would you like to ...

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

Yes, in terms of numbers ...

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Could I just stop you there? So you are talking about those who would be behind. Can you just describe, just under normal circumstances how this section of the law is administered?

**The Minister for Education:**

How do you mean by: "Normal circumstances"?

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Just maybe a brief overview of how you meet this area of the law?

**The Minister for Education:**

Well, it exists as a policy. Like I say, most of the children are adopted into the school at present; very few of them fall out of requests to sit back a year and so it is the policy as we describe it. Did you want Julian to ...

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, go on, Julian, sorry.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

That is, I suppose, in more general terms. In terms of a request where parents consider either a delayed start or keeping children back a year, we get very few requests each year; I would say probably 3 or 4. It is very rare to get one specifically where parents are asking for a child to be kept back a year because they are a summer birthday. In almost every case, apart from one in the last 3 years, I would say, it is because there are additional and complicating factors typically linked to S.E.N. (Special Educational Needs) or health needs, or something like that. So if it is just a request to keep a child back on the basis of a summer birthday I am not insensitive to the fact that sometimes starting school is a very emotional time for the child and parents. Essentially my first response about it is to: "Go and visit the school where you are planning to place your child and, if you like, seek some reassurance and confidence that the school can provide for your child's needs in the first instance." In almost every single circumstance that is a pretty effective response and parents go: "Yes, I kind of get it. I think this can work. It will be fine." There is a degree of reassurance around starting school at any given time in terms of parents; they want to know their kids are going to be safe and are going to thrive. The best way to get that is to go and visit the school your child is going to be placed in.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So you are satisfied that the majority, or most children in the Island, are falling within this law and that is being fulfilled?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes. I think most of you have visited primary schools and seen the high level of professionalism that is evidenced with both the teaching staff and the heads, so they are fully aware of the situation.

**Chief Education Officer:**

If I can just add a bit of context. If you compare us to England, one of the issues we have had in our system is that almost none of our children have 2 years' experience in nursery, whereas in the U.K. (United Kingdom) a lot do. A lot of our children do not even have one year in nursery so, in terms of the context, you can see that in our schools in that nursery provision here needs to be expanded, which is why any opportunity we have we are putting nurseries into all of our state primary schools as and when the opportunities arise, so the context is slightly different.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay. We will come back to nurseries later. We have got a question on that later, thank you.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Again, just looking at the law, Minister, when looking at the regulations around this part the Minister is empowered to make regulations in this area about school starting age and I just wondered, for the record, if you could just explain are there any regulations in place and what are they?

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

About compulsory school age generally, not just the starting age.

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes. We have regulations in that all children need to be in school, I think at the age of 5. I cannot remember the actual date now, but other than that there are no separate regulations, apart from the suggested policy that we have here.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

What power is used to start children at school in the September of the year they are 5 years old?

**The Minister for Education:**

I think it is just an accepted practice that this has been embedded within the educational remit for quite some time, now. I think in terms of power we do not use any different power than the one that has already been exhibited.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Do you know how long it has been in place?

**The Minister for Education:**

No, I do not.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

I do. It was parental pressure, because the law, the regulations were that, around about 25 years ago, you could only start at the start of the term when you were 5.

[10:15]

The Education Department at the time were under a bit of pressure to make it more flexible, which is the current policy where the vast majority start in September, but parents still have the right to start their child, their boy or girl, in a term in which they are 5, and I think that is pretty rare. So it was a flexible approach.

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

What information is provided to parents about the options they have for their children starting in the January or April term? You said it is only a relatively small number that take it up, but how is the information put out there, that it is something that is possible?

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

It is in the policy. It is on the website and so if people ask the question the information is there.

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

So it is purely if people ask the question they will find it? You do not make any effort at all to go out and say: "This is the option, just so you know"?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes, I think it is because the numbers are so few, to be fair, but I think there is a move to put more information up on the website. I have got to say this has been an absolute education for me, having to read this material, because it was not something that was particularly in my line of sight, so I have learned a great deal over this process about early education. Yes, there is a move, as I

think we have said, about lots of things to do with education, to get more material out there to parents.

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

Do you think there would be a greater take-up if information was more widely distributed?

**The Minister for Education:**

I could not answer that. I do not feel so, because I think, as Julian has already answered, there are so few numbers in the first place.

**Chief Education Officer:**

The information is there when parents are looking to start their children; it is clear in the guidance for parents and the policy is available on the website. We do not actively go out and suggest it is a good idea, but it is not hidden away. It is part of the information that is provided to parents, that it is their right.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Obviously if they did come forward we would accommodate them in the term that their child turns 5, so that is how we work.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So within the catchment school system, then, obviously we do have a catchment system here, if a parent does make that choice for their child that they would like them to start in the third term or the second term of the year, is a place reserved for them then in their catchment school or the school of their choice?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

We allocate a term in advance, so we would have to look. The summer term ... to be honest, I cannot recall this happening during my time, but we would try and get them into their catchment school, absolutely.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

I can recall it happening, and we did keep a place in that school for that child.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, so just to clarify, Minister, if parents did want their child to start in the second or third term their child would be guaranteed a place in their catchment school?

**The Minister for Education:**

I do not think it is a guarantee, I think we look at the overall thing, but in terms of the criteria that fit for that catchment school, yes.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, so there is some uncertainty here that there might not be a place kept for that child?

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

We look at it case-by-case, especially if there is pressure on the school for a September start.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, so if there were other children that wanted to start or their parents want them to start in September would they get priority?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

They would be the ones starting at that point in time, so we would allocate based on the criteria that we have, so we would look at catchment, we would look at siblings and so on. It would be very difficult to deny a parent who has a priority at that point in time. As I said, if you go back further than my time this has happened, but of course we would be sensitive to it. You would not want to deny a child their catchment school, if possible. There would be a number of factors we would look at, the size of the cohort, and I think we will probably come on to that at some point in terms of the actual mechanics of allocation, but there would be a number of factors at the time depending on what the demand was for that school at that point in time as well.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, so if it is on a term-by-term basis the whole intake for the year is not allocated at once?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

We do, you see, because we get so few of these that the parents do not want to take up their starting place either in January or in April, so we are pretty much blanket allocating places in September.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I am just trying to imagine, because what we have seen is that parents are not aware of this part of the law, that they can hold the child until ...

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Some parents.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Well, some parents have communicated to us they are not aware of that. So if perhaps as a result of this review or any change in your policy, more parents were aware and more parents started to ask for that, rather than wanting to hold their child back a whole year, they might think: "Well, this is a good compromise to have them enter in January or April", is that something that the system can adapt to?

**Chief Education Officer:**

I think it is a fair point. If I am a parent and I want my child to start in my local nursery in January, and it is my right to do that, there is a tension in the system if we fill all those places and we get to January and that place is unavailable. As we have said, the numbers are very small, but that is perhaps something that we need to look at in terms of our admissions. I do not think parents ought to be penalised for exercising their right, so we are quite happy to look at that. The numbers are quite low ...

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Thank you for that. Minister?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes, I agree, and I think what you are hearing is that the way the department works is predicated on the welfare of the child, really; that is where we are coming from.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So is that something that definitely you would be looking at?

**The Minister for Education:**

We could look at that, yes.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So if a parent and a family has decided it is best for their child, perhaps in conjunction with discussion with yourselves, that their child should start in January or April, that they could be guaranteed a place just as much as if they were taking it in September. Okay.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Because we did have some parents express to us that they felt pressured into sending their child into a school when they were not ready at September because they have a fear of not having a slot later on.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes. We could look at that.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Thank you for that. To sum up on that one then, obviously as a panel we are always trying to assess what is in the best interests of the children, so you will be looking at that policy to see what you can provide that will be in the best interests of the children, and it may be a change in your policy so that potentially places could be reserved for the January or April term, rather than children having to take it in September?

**Chief Education Officer:**

What we need to build into that is parents stating: "I would like a place in that nursery but I do not want it until there" so that we could hold a place open at the reception point, so we will look at that.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, thank you. I just wanted to absolutely clarify that.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

This is more of an issue, of course, for the summer term than the January, because we do allocate a term in advance, so for January it would not be a problem.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, thank you.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Looking at our question 2 now, how does the starting age work in non-provided schools?

**The Minister for Education:**

That is interesting. Again, it is one of those voyages of discovery for me, because I had to go back through the information, and basically they do not come to the department. I think this is one of the reasons they make the choices that they do. Private schools, parents do feel that is one of the reasons they are paying for that choice, so we do not hear from them, is the truth.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

But presumably the bits around they have to be in by 5 still stick?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Okay, thank you. So just for the record, how does the Education (Jersey) Law apply to non-provided schools and their children?

**The Minister for Education:**

In the same way as it does for the others.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Yes, okay. Are there children starting in the September term? Have you got any figures looking at the uptake for non-provided schools? Is it again the same statistics: that most start in September with a few starting later?

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Do not feel you have to read out all the statistics.

**The Minister for Education:**

I am just wondering who has got figures on that.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

We have numbers.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

That does not say when they start at a school.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

No, it does not. No.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

If you could provide us with that information in due course?

**The Minister for Education:**

We can provide you with some information.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

We might well have to come back to you with that.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Okay, thank you.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

How do you monitor then, Minister, whether all children in the Island of compulsory school age are all attending school? How do you monitor that to ensure that children are in school?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

In terms of the state schools?

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes. Is there any interaction with other departments on children of school age in the Island? Do you interact with Health or Social Security, to make sure that children maybe who arrive in the Island from elsewhere or who do not have much contact with departments ...

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

We are made aware through Social Security when children arrive in the Island, through their designated safeguarding officer, so we do have a safety net to ensure that those arriving in the Island are then attending school. We have recently had one from France, for example, who I contacted and said: "I believe you have just arrived. Have you intention ...?" and I did discover from our officer that they had applied for a place, so we do check.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

We also have a database in place where we have a list of every single child in the whole school system, which gets updated on a termly basis, so we are then able to make checks about who comes into the system and who goes out of the system.

**Chief Education Officer:**

It may be worth pointing out also that in Jersey, unlike England, it is much safer here for children whose parents decide to educate them other than at school. So in England if that happens they are out of the system, and it is quite difficult to engage. Here in Jersey they have to work with the department; Cliff knows the families well and meets with them regularly. We can monitor the children's education, so my view is they are better in school but if they are not in school and they are being educated at home, we have information on their progress and those parents work with us quite well.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

They do. There is a strong family group and we work directly with them.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Do you provide them with support as well as monitoring?

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

They take a clear choice; in fact, our support is not always welcome when they have taken the choice to educate at home anyway, but termly one of my colleagues visits the family, visits the child and then annually the assessment is monitored and also safeguarded so we can catch both ends.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Thank you. Just thinking about families who have the ability to pay to have more choice, Minister, do you think that there is enough choice within the state system? Is there the same level of choice with parents who can afford to pay for that choice in a private school, or parents who do not have that option to pay? Do the parents who do not have the money to pay have the same choice within our state system?

**The Minister for Education:**

I do not think that is the principal reason for their choice, I think it is just one element of their choice. I think there is enough within the state schools, and again I am just on my annual visit around all the schools at the moment, and it seems to be that we are accommodating all the requests from parents at the moment.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So you think the level of choice is the same?

**The Minister for Education:**

I think they are very similar in terms of context, but again it is what are private schools for if not offering more choice; perhaps different class sizes and so on? There is an element of difference between the 2.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Do you think that you could be offering more in terms of choices to parents who do not have the option to pay and to get more choice?

**The Minister for Education:**

It would depend on what sort of choices you are referring to.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

We will come back to that question. Let us move on.

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

We are going to go to 4 and 5 now, which I think tie in a little bit. So question 4: how does the Minister consider the local school starting age sits when compared internationally?

**The Minister for Education:**

Again, this is a voyage of discovery for me, because I have not really looked at that context.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

It is interesting, is it not?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes, it is interesting, and it is one of those where you can find it in 2 camps, either this is the best thing to do or this is not; the pros and cons. Looking across the board I think we have got a situation because we are an island, if you are asking me where I feel we are, we have accommodated it on a needs-must basis, and I think we have accommodated it very well. It goes back to the principle I put right at the beginning, which is it is all about the welfare of the child. Have we got the right people dealing with the right situation at the right time? We are not Finland; we do not take our children in at a much later age or anything like that. I found it difficult to find right across internationally what the differences were. I do not know if there is anybody else. Have you done anything?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

We had some numbers in terms of the starting age by country, and out of a total of 205 countries, 24 started children at the age of 5, 143 at 6, and 38 at 7. That is what we found. We will be taking that as statutory school age, and obviously within many of those countries there would be some education provision before that as well.

**The Minister for Education:**

So in terms of context I think we have identified the better route forward in terms of where we are at the moment.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

Because if you look at those figures in isolation you have no understanding what the maternity situation is, what the tax situation is and if you look at somewhere like Finland, for example, no tax,

and paternity rights, and so there are all sorts of social issues without going anywhere near the educational ones.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, we have learnt a lot about some of those things from Professor Wood.

**The Minister for Education:**

It probably has a connection again with the 1001 Critical Days, tax laws that look at these areas prior to getting to school, because it is about Early Years, as far as I am concerned.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

Can I talk to that as well quickly? School starting age can only be understood in the context of the type of experience a child gets when they get into school anyway, but I am sure you are going to come back on to that as a specific issue.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, we will definitely come round to that.

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

What are the advantages and disadvantages of aligning the school starting age with current policy thinking in the U.K., particularly England?

**The Minister for Education:**

Obviously if we start to play around with the figures and we have got some information that relates to that, I think it is for another question, but it would have more impact because of the size of the Island and the size of the cohort.

[10:30]

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

More impact, sorry, if you changed it?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes. In the U.K. there are considerations being made all over the place at the moment; we find it quite confusing to see clarity about what they are doing, so we are waiting to see what the results are with that, but if they change it there would be more impact upon the Island.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I think what Deputy Mézec was trying to get at was how are the policies for starting age here? A lot of our education policies are adapted or adopted from the U.K. Is that where it comes from?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Do you ever look elsewhere to adjust policies in this area, or others?

**The Minister for Education:**

I think we do. I think since becoming Minister, and certainly even as an Assistant Minister, there were always discussions about what we could do and what the changes could affect and how we operate with the size of the population, and the economics of it all, particularly the economics on this Island. Again, it is about the welfare of the child and have we got a situation that we could change that would dramatically change the situation for the child? I do not think so. I think we have identified where we are at the moment, but we will have to see what the U.K. is doing before making a decision.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Perhaps just to confuse the conversation ... I would like to say it is the wrong question, not the wrong question, but a more interesting question could be: rather than at what age should kids start at school, but what do we do with a thousand children who become 5, whether they are in nurseries at the age of 3 or 4? There are a thousand children in each cohort, so here in Jersey we could have a very interesting debate or discussion around what children need at the age of 2, 3, 4 and 5. We could do things here that nobody else probably can. The difficulty we have got and the reason why we have not engaged in that debate at the moment is simply the capacity within the department. We are dealing with, as you know, a lot of big issues but sooner rather than later I think we need to have a grown-up, intelligent, informed conversation about what is best for children's learning and social development at certain ages and introduce that into our own curriculum. I think that would be a really interesting discussion and one we need to get right, because it is very important. We know the impact it has on later attainment. I think rather than get into discussions about which date in the year children should start school I think we should get into at which stage of development we need children to have certain experiences.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Lots of our questions will be covering that later, you will be pleased to hear. So this is a priority down the road for you, then. Do you have a plan for when you will be looking at that, or a timescale?

**Chief Education Officer:**

No, but we will see what the outcome of the Scrutiny Committee is; there are normally one or 2 recommendations.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Hopefully we can add to that work and be helpful.

**Chief Education Officer:**

It purely and simply is a very small department with a very large number of priorities to achieve over the next 3 years, so it is simply to do with capacity.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay. Minister, anything to add?

**The Minister for Education:**

No, I think Justin has highlighted the fact that this is one of the reasons we like Scrutiny to look at these particular areas that we may not have considered in any great depth, is to provide critical information from experts, and equally then for us to reconsider what we may already have in place.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

That is not what you said at the beginning of the review. I am pleased that you are pleased that we are looking at it. Shall we move on? I just want to ask about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Jersey has signed up to. What are the interactions with that in this area? Looking particularly at Articles 5 and 18, which I can read, if people want me to read that.

**The Minister for Education:**

I think I have got Article 5 down here, which is that: "Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to direct and guide their children" and I think basically to a great extent we do. I think in terms of the particular Articles you have pulled up here I think we are neutral on that. I think what we have already described and the manner in which we deal with families shows that that is paramount, that we have got that discussion working for us. That is the reason we have got people like Julian, who can come in, with such small numbers, and have direct contact with the families. I think equally the discussion with the schools is paramount.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So do you feel that Article 18 then, which states that parents have responsibility for bringing up their children, should consider what is best for their child and Governments should respect the

responsibility of parents and not take the responsibility away from parents, is that something that you feel is happening satisfactorily in terms of the Education Department?

**The Minister for Education:**

In a short answer, yes, I do. Julian?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

It is a very tricky one, this particular issue, and I do not want to sound patronising about it, but because everyone has been to school everybody has got a view about what school might be like when their children are starting at school age. So clearly we respect Article 5, but it is about making sure parents' views are as informed as they can be on the right matters at the right time. I have got a few parents who come and speak with me about school starting ages and they are making decisions about their children based on what they experienced when they went to school, and I kind of get that; it is not for me to tell them they are right or they are wrong. I do my best to inform them about how things are these days, because things are really different now, and particularly in Jersey, as compared to how they were 20 or 30 years ago when they were in school. Of course, we respect the rights of parents and their roles in relation to this but really it is about informing their thinking, their decision-making so they are making the right decision based on the right evidence, I guess. So in that sense, yes.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

We will come back to this a little bit further on, but we have touched again on information. We found that, Julian, what you have just said about parents basing assumptions on their own experience definitely came through from many of the parents we have spoken to. In a similar way to you said information about when children have to start school is on your website I am guessing information about what happens at school is also on your website, but do you think there is more you can do in going out to parents and making the information available and accessible and going to them to solve some of these problems?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes, I think we do and I think it is the other way around: we get parents into schools more often now, so there is more evidence, if I take d'Hautree as an example, I think they get 15 parents a week in to observe education. I think Julian is absolutely right; we all have our positions and our mentalities about our previous education, and that is what people carry with them. When they get into schools now, particularly reception or primary schools, they see a completely different environment and it is much more complex than they first assumed. As one of my colleagues says, from the outside it always looks like kids are just doing finger-painting but of course it is not; it is much more holistic in the way they deal with it, because you do not know what the differences are

in the children, you do not know the complexities of their own imaginations, their own minds. So when we get parents in, and we get as many as we can in to see schools now, it does change.

**Chief Education Officer:**

It might be worth mentioning, if you remember at a previous Scrutiny one of the recommendations was to begin the idea of having parent forums, because in a way there is nothing more powerful than parents communicating to parents.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

The action contained 2 documents, obviously our business plan with the Chief Executive stating clearly that we would enter into parent forums, but also the recommendations through your piece of work. That has advanced to a point where we have got the terms of reference in place. I am meeting this Wednesday with a group of pre-school parents who already exist, with Dr. Lisa Perkins, and through that group we will agree how to communicate to all parents of children with special needs. We are targeting for a September start for the parent forum for those children with special needs, and once we have got that working and we have ensured that it works properly, then we will create Island-wide parent forums for all ages, all abilities, but we will start with the special needs piece.

**Chief Education Officer:**

The idea is that we would use that forum as a sounding board as we are developing policy and discussing questions like this, but also as a launching pad to communicate to parents so we can have parents rewriting materials in parent-friendly language and then communicating that out. Again we are small enough I think to make that work here, whereas elsewhere it tends not to.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, that sounds like a brilliant step in the right direction. Can I just ask then about whether there are difficulties communicating with parents before the children are in the system? I assume once a child is registered in a school and you have the lines of communication that is relatively easy to get information to parents, but before a parent is making these decisions that could be when the child is a baby. How do you get the information at that stage to parents so that they can start to plan things like school starting age and what type of school they want the children to go to?

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

In those rare cases the parents ask, and ...

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I am not talking about where parents have already decided they want something different. I mean, for the general population, how do you make that information available? It might be that that does not happen yet, but is ...

**The Minister for Education:**

It does not happen yet, not to the extent you perhaps are ...

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

We write to the parents the year before they are due to enter school.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

The year before? Okay.

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes. I think you were asking some time ago, perhaps on another Scrutiny, how do we talk about the Early Years thing. It is part of the Early Years, certainly from my perspective ... because I was quite struck going back, this is prior to reading the material about Early Years, the Finnish baby boxes in the example is a thing we could do. There is only a consideration of a thousand babies a year and if we could put some material out that pulls all of this together, that is designed for parents to allow that focus so that we can clearly see the route through and all the sort of things like that.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So you could put leaflets about different things in there?

**The Minister for Education:**

I would love to do that. I have asked for an example to be passed through. We have got a Finnish Ambassador in Mourant or somewhere, so he is tasked with the idea of looking at that, and we think that could be sponsored by private sponsorship. So there are ideas around that already.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes. So is that part of the 1001 Days plan; is that within that?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, so we might see a way then to maybe get some of this information out. Is that something that you are committed to improving?

**The Minister for Education:**

Absolutely. There is much more discussion now between ourselves and Health, as an example, certainly through the 1001 Days and the work that Cliff does.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

It sounds like things are really moving in terms of Early Years in this area.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

Dr. Helen Miles has done an awful lot of work. I am sure you have had access to that.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, she has briefed us in great detail; she does communicate with us. Obviously we have to go through the Minister for Home Affairs to scrutinise that area, so we do keep in touch. Sorry, I did go on a bit of a tangent there. I am going to ask Professor Wood to take the next one, please.

**Professor E. Wood:**

We are just going to focus now on the idea of the readiness of the child. Children of 4 years and 5 years old vary considerably in their social, emotional, intellectual and physical abilities. How does the Minister ensure that these variations are catered for when children enter reception class?

**The Minister for Education:**

Thank you for the question. I think the difference lies between making children school ready, and the schools making themselves ready for the children, is the perspective we take. I have been very pleased to visit primary schools; I think I have visited 12 so far on my latest tour, and all of that has been evidenced. We have a teaching and learning policy, which I think you have got copies of, which was produced by one of my colleagues back in 2013, it was reviewed in July 2013, and which gives you a flavour of how we have adopted a policy, if you like, relating to that. But I am very confident, and I am sure you have visited the schools already, that the heads and the teachers are fully aware of what they are expecting when they get the children in.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

To add to that though, there is very detailed transition planning between our mainstream primary schools and the nurseries, so if the nursery obviously is attached to the school then that is pretty straightforward. If not, the head of foundation does go and visit all the private nurseries where the boys and girls are coming into the school and there is that transition planning.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Do you think that that works as effectively, regardless of whether the nursery is on site and attached to the primary school or whether there is different feeder pre-school provision?

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

I think I once heard a quote, and this will answer your question, one or 2 primary schools can get children from up to 20 different nurseries if they have not got a nursery attached, so you can imagine those complications.

**The Minister for Education:**

I suppose the answer to your question is to some extent it is effective, but it could always be more effective. In fact, I was just talking to ... there are now small cluster groups of schools getting together to look at those transitional areas and they are working on that at the moment.

**Professor E. Wood:**

So as part of that, can I ask what Early Years practitioners are required to do to assess the children when they come into reception class?

**Chief Education Officer:**

We have an Early Years assessment framework which is largely based on the U.K. model, so we have adopted more or less lock, stock and barrel the Early Years Foundation profile.

**Professor E. Wood:**

The Foundation State profile? Okay.

**Chief Education Officer:**

I think it needs looking at because, as I said earlier, I think we could tailor-make it. Basically what our schools seek to do is to identify as early as possible the learning and development needs of the children, plan for those needs and monitor that progress, and then shift as they move forward. I am not happy that we have got a number of primary schools without a nursery, not just because of the points you make in terms of identifying those needs, but there is a larger issue there too: if you visit primary schools without a nursery you can feel the lack of Early Years practitioners and practice, even at key stage one.

[10:45]

If you do not have those Early Years practitioners who seem to have skills and experiences that others do not, the school is not complete. You can see in our key stage one results where we are behind England by just one or 2 percentage points, particularly in writing. I think that is largely because of that lack of nursery experience and some of our primaries, of not having that experience in place. We have just adopted a policy, which is not very popular, I do not think, with our commercial colleagues, that wherever possible as an opportunity arises we are going to put nurseries in our States primary schools. So we are starting with Springfield for this September. We then have plans for Trinity, so that as soon as we can all of our schools will have nurseries. For one or 2 that will be difficult; St. Luke's for example, we are going to have to be terribly imaginative about where we put it. We have just appointed a new head there and all of the potential candidates had all sorts of schemes to introduce a nursery, one or 2 crackpot schemes, but on the whole ... Les Landes would need, for example, a whole new capital build programme. So there are issues, but I do think we have too many primary schools without a nursery, and therefore without that Early Years practice.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Would you anticipate that provision being for children aged 3 to 4/5 in the nursery settings?

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes.

**Professor E. Wood:**

So just to follow up on the question on assessment, if you have been following England and you have adapted the Early Years Foundation Stage profile, are you then going to move to the baseline assessment that England has recently adopted?

**Chief Education Officer:**

We have not decided on that yet, there are mixed views, and so we have not come to that decision. What we have done, unlike England, is introduce a coherent assessment framework for key stages one and 2 across all of our schools, that has all been agreed. So whatever we do in Early Years needs to align with that transition so that we can move forward. So we are yet to make that decision.

**The Minister for Education:**

It will be interesting to hear your thoughts on that.

**Professor E. Wood:**

I think I would advise caution in this regard, because the baseline assessment system in England is already having problems and they are now talking about a very reductionist test for school readiness, so I think be careful what you follow, because it is an area of quite fast-moving change at the moment.

**Chief Education Officer:**

We are not fantastically enthusiastic; in fact we are very sceptical. The reason that we have not decided yes or no is simply that if we do not adopt the English approach we do need a Jersey version, because we do need to have an understanding of where children are in terms of their readiness before they move through. So, put it this way, I am the Chief Education Officer, and I am not keen, so I am trying to take everybody with me, but ...

**Professor E. Wood:**

You used the word “holistic” earlier, and I think it is very different trying to sustain that holistic understanding of the child’s development and capabilities, and that is very different then from implementing tests and assessment regimes that always tend to focus on those skills which can be more easily measured.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes. I think I have mentioned this to Deputy Doublet: I want to avoid where, if you go to an English Early Years environment and ask the teacher, very experienced teachers, how the kids are doing, they will go to their evidence and they will go to their data. In Jersey I want to go to a position where teachers will have the confidence to tell us, through their skills and experience, how the children are doing and have data to back that up. I think going to the baseline assessment in the U.K. will certainly have people reaching for their mark books in nurseries, which fills me with dread.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Do you think we do still have that atmosphere that a teacher will give you their feelings?

**Chief Education Officer:**

We do; not as bad as England because we do not have Ofsted and other things in place. It is a different balance to strike.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So you are trying to maintain that trust?

**The Minister for Education:**

We have a very open dialogue with teachers and with the unions as well. It is always a point, when we are talking to the unions, that: “We would like more time to do a bit more training” and get closer to them in that sort of context. I do not know if you came across it, but we only have 3 inset days, as opposed to 5 in the U.K., and one of those inset days is the Battle of Britain day, so it is really 2 and a half, if there is a half in there at all. So the dialogue is fully open with the teachers.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So can I just jump in? Going back to what we were saying about assessing or judging readiness when a child comes in, I know that a lot of work has been done to gain consistency between the private nurseries and the States nurseries in terms of that first level of the foundation stage assessment. Is that still ongoing, or is there still more work to be done? If you felt, Minister, that was consistent across States and private nurseries, would that information not be enough to give you that indication of readiness when the children came in, whatever nursery they were from?

**Chief Education Officer:**

There is consistency here and there has been for some time. The commercial sector works very closely with the Early Years team and, as anywhere else, I think the quality of what you see in the commercial sector and the state sector varies but there is at least consistency in approach. The commercial sector has adopted the Early Years Foundation Stage 2 framework, and so there is that consistency. What we do need to do in the Early Years market is to do 2 or 3 things: one, we need to improve the overall quality, the second thing is we need to increase the capacity within it. We still have lots of children who do not have Early Years experience and they go straight into reception. You can still spot them at the age of 7 or 8, you can spot the kids who have not gone through a good quality nursery, and I think we need to broaden the choice for parents so there is greater flexibility there for parents: term time, part-time and those things. So, that is the direction we are going in.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

Can I just add a little bit more in terms of representing vulnerable children or children with special needs starting school? We have had a growth bid agreed which will double the size of the Early Years Inclusion Team, as it will be named, which will allow us to work more comprehensively with private settings, pre-school settings in a way that we probably have not been able to to date. So I think we can be much more confident looking ahead from September onwards in terms of profiling vulnerable learners as they drip into school in September, or whenever they choose to in the course of their first year.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

This was from the first round of the M.T.F.P. (Medium Term Financial Plan), was it not?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

It was, yes.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So that increased funding has not been felt in the schools yet but that is coming in September, okay.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

They are being looked into right now.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Any time by this January, and we are recruiting now ready for a September start.

**Professor E. Wood:**

So just following up the question on assessment, can you tell me whether there are any other people in schools who are responsible for contributing to the assessment of young children on entry to school?

**Chief Education Officer:**

The answer to that is yes, so we have some family support workers; not enough, just one or 2. We have nursery assistants and we have multi-agency access. We would love to develop a team of family support workers. The budget does not allow us to do that and that is a hole in our armoury because we are still having nurseries, both private and States nurseries, that are getting to know the parents just before the children arrive, and it is too late by then to be working with them. What we need is some outreach work so that we can get to know the families well in advance of them arriving on our doorstep. In fact, we do still have families just turn up that we are unaware of, just literally pop up off the grid, which is very concerning; more here than you find in England, which is of concern.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Family support workers, are there social workers?

**Chief Education Officer:**

No. They come from various professions and they work to support families that fall below the social care threshold, and we literally have a handful.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Is it Janvrin where they have one?

**Chief Education Officer:**

Correct, yes.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, we saw that school, did we not? Yes.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes, and that person is having an enormous impact on some families and therefore on the children. We are trying to shift our resources to deal with families rather than just the children, but it will take us a while to get there.

**The Minister for Education:**

It goes back to those 4 principles that we put in place right at the very beginning.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes. So if you had more of these family support workers, would they be based in centres like The Bridge, would that be kind of where ...

**Chief Education Officer:**

Personally, I would have them based in schools.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Based in schools. But are they similar services to The Bridge though; it all ties in, does it?

**Chief Education Officer:**

No, I think there are lots of families out there that need support that will not go anywhere near The Bridge. The Bridge and the Samarès centres are dealing with a relatively small number of families. If you think of our Jersey pupil premium, we think that is going to get to about, once it is up and running and once we get out of the pilot stage, about 18 per cent of children on the Island; that is a lot of families.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

If you had family support workers, would that help with what we were talking about with communicating with parents far before they were involved with schools?

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes because then you are sitting in somebody's front room and you would be talking about health, education; a whole range of issues suddenly become possible. We just do not have those tentacles yet.

**The Minister for Education:**

You have seen the evidence of the one at Samarès and of course it has been mooted several times for consideration of putting one in another area, possibly at Les Quennevais.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

We started it in October as well and what you find through that process, where the children are pre-school age and they are identified, it can be very helpful for the school to be involved now; they are inviting the school to attend those meetings.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes. I do not know if we talked about early health at the quarterly hearing, did we?

**Chief Education Officer:**

We talked about it very briefly. We are now working with 40-something families, 43 or 44 families.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Well maybe another time it would be quite interesting to see how that is going. Sorry, Professor Wood.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

We usually share quarterly data and I am happy to share that data.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, thank you, that would be good. Sorry, please continue.

**Professor E. Wood:**

I just wanted to bring this back to children starting school. How is flexibility between Early Years classes working in practice? Is there any flexibility?

**Chief Education Officer:**

If the nursery is in one of our States schools then the Early Years provision operates as a single entity; that is the plan, but it works better in some schools than others. So the facilities, where possible, are physically located, so as an Early Years space rather than as separate nurseries. But as you quite rightly say, for a number of children who are out in the commercial sector it does

not work so well. But all the indoor/outdoor play is flexible and there is a lot of movement between them, and the children can operate between them the whole of the Early Years experience.

**Professor E. Wood:**

On my last visit we visited some schools and there was some flexibility in one school between reception and year one where children were mingling at certain periods of the day where they had some free choice. Do you consider that to be an appropriate practice for Jersey, where possible, to have that flexibility?

**Chief Education Officer:**

Where possible, yes, we do. Yes.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

It is an interesting thing. As compared to some schools in England, some schools in Jersey need more explicit permission to do it, which is just one of those things, really. So people might go: "Oh, it would be really helpful if we could do this and be more fluid and flexible." And you would go: "Well, that is fine" and it is to be encouraged, whereas perhaps in England specifically people would do it more naturally I think, or used to historically. It did not seem to be such a problem. It may have locked itself down a bit since I left England, I do not know. It really is not a problem at all, and it should not be here, but sometimes you have to give people permission in a way where they can make their own decisions about it. But cultures change, to be fair.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Yes. Okay, thank you.

**Chief Education Officer:**

We get constantly surprised at the permissions that our schools ask for. We just say that: "They are your schools, run them." If it is windy we get the odd phone call: "Are the children allowed out to play?"

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Oh, no, you do not.

**The Minister for Education:**

Particularly when there are a lot of trees around.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes, so things like flexibility around key stage one, some heads will do it and then hopefully they will not get told off, but the culture here is a little bit more controlled and we are trying to take the shackles off our schools.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, yes, quite a risk-averse culture.

**The Minister for Education:**

That goes back to the 4 principles again, that was the autonomy, and again, as Julian says and I think you were hinting at it before, it is about building up those elements of trust and certainly that trust is beginning to be evidenced now.

**Professor E. Wood:**

But I think maybe it is also the unintended negative effects of so much policy intervention that if you have got boundaries that have labels and very distinct age bands, then those boundaries act to restrict practice in some ways.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes, I agree. We need to think of an Early Years team and collective resource and expertise.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

To balance that though I have seen many areas over the years where there is interaction between the 2 year groups, reception and year one.

[11:00]

**Professor E. Wood:**

Yes, okay. Thank you. Sorry, I have got one more question. Can you tell us how the views of parents relating to the readiness of their children are taken into account?

**Chief Education Officer:**

We rely absolutely on the relationship they have with the schools direct, unless they come forward to the department. So we are relying on that relationship between the schools and the parents.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

What if that parent has never had a relationship with a school before?

**Chief Education Officer:**

I would hope our schools would be welcoming and do all they can to make sure they did. It is in their job description really, to be blunt, if you are a ...

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I understand that but, like Deputy Doublet was saying earlier about having that information for the parents beforehand, you have stated there are some parents who do not have their children going to the nursery; not all primary schools have nurseries. So how does the parent interact and get to know that school at least a year in advance of their child going to the school to have that relationship?

**Chief Education Officer:**

We cannot get away from it, there is a parental responsibility here.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Absolutely.

**Chief Education Officer:**

If you have got young children you need to go out there and you need to make contact with schools and you need to take opportunities up but, at the same time, we need to be very warm and welcoming and go out too. So, we can always improve our communication. I am a firm believer in parents communicating with parents and I have got a lot of faith in, as we develop our parent forum, and we need to crack on with that, I think that will be very helpful.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

But as a parent you would not know what school your child is going to at least a year beforehand.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Yes, so it is the January, February time before the term.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Then if you contest that it might be longer. So it is very difficult in terms of having what you would call a relationship. I mean, that relationship does not really build up for the primary school at least a year or 2 years into it.

**Chief Education Officer:**

But once you have been allocated to a school the school will be in touch with you as a family; they will not wait for 1st September. The responsibility is twofold: parents have a responsibility to get in touch with the school and the school has a responsibility too and the 2 need to work together. So

all of our schools will proactively approach the parents as soon as they know who is coming to their school. I think there is an issue before that, and that is the point I am making: I think we need to be much more open about what our schools do and how they do it so people are much more confident in approaching them and knowledgeable when they get there. At the moment all the information is all a bit one-sided: "We have got all the information, you have to come and get it." We want to get all that information out there so that when the contact is made there is already a lot of information in the hands of parents so they are more empowered during that conversation. So it is a balance. But we would not want you to think schools do not actively go out and approach their prospective parents; they do that.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I am not saying that, I am just asking you to explain what kind of relationship you expect them to have to make that informed choice.

**The Minister for Education:**

I think it also goes back to what we were just discussing: providing the parents with some sort of timeline and a concept as to where they can get involved and what they can do at a much earlier stage, and I certainly agree with that. I think that is paramount, that we begin to open up those dialogues, and I think the directors highlighted there is, and from my observance, an open dialogue with most schools with parents in advance, if they can possibly do that, because they understand the concept.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I think that is a good point that Deputy Vallois has made though: so as a parent you get the letter saying: "Your child has been accepted at school X in January", is that right, and they are going in in September, so it is the same year. I mean, is there scope to change the allocations procedure and make it earlier? Because even if a parent is proactive and they are talking to the department, if they do not know the specific school the child is going to until January then whatever efforts you are making and whatever effort the parent is making to go out is going to be very difficult, is it not? Then, if they do not like the offer that has been made to them, their choices are very limited then, are they not, for private schools or alternative education? So, is there scope to do that earlier so that parents have got more time?

**Chief Education Officer:**

The problem with bringing it forward earlier then is if we bring it back too early, people change their minds, they move house.

**The Minister for Education:**

It creates expectations.

**Chief Education Officer:**

It is a balance that is struck between having fairly firm decisions and a timescale. I agree there are pros and cons.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

I think if there are a number of children moving through the school, though, in the school nursery then they would obviously develop those relationships.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So that will improve with your new nurseries.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Exactly, yes.

**Chief Education Officer:**

That is a long term strategy, you know, we will have a nursery in Springfield this September, Trinity the following year and St. Mary's a year after that; that will still leave us with a couple of schools without a nursery, which will be more difficult to resolve.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

It would be good though if there was some open-mindedness maybe about looking at that when the places are allocated. I do not know if that will be a recommendation.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

There is a fly in the ointment: one of the problems we have is with children with complex S.E.N.s, special needs, we try and avoid making placement decisions too early because of course we need opportunities for children to develop so some of their needs can settle down as they approach school age, and it is all really quite tight. The January threshold creates a real problem for us. We understand it needs to be done but it does create some problems where we do not really want to make placement decisions and we hold back on them as long as we can to make sure kids go to the right kind of school, and we judge it pretty well.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, so it is balancing needs with different groups of children.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

These children will be priority as well in terms of allocating them to a school.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

It is not insurmountable, it is just an issue to be mindful of, that is all.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Just on the point of the catchment system. Most parents will know where their local primary school is and, you know, if they are that keen on it they can always contact the head teacher to get involved and to see the school.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Many do.

**The Minister for Education:**

They do, yes.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

But just to reassert the question, because I did not quite understand the answer: how are the views of the parents relating to the readiness of the child taken into account? We are accepting that the schools are welcoming but how is that process managed if a parent does raise concerns?

**Chief Education Officer:**

In terms of them not being ready?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Not being ready.

**Chief Education Officer:**

They would raise that concern first of all with the school and if that still is a problem then they would come to the department and the policy that Julian has described ...

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Or either way; not just if the parent feels they are not ready, there might be a parent who wants their child to start earlier because they feel they are ... how, generally, in this process of children starting school, do you get the views from the parents? Not just if the parents think there is a problem but how do you just generally get the parents' views?

**The Minister for Education:**

Well I was just going to say I think there is a great deal of trust between our schools and parents and schools in Jersey. I think it is a difference, maybe you can tell me differently in this context, but I think the schools are very proactive in trying to get out to those parents and saying: "Look, we want to make this transition", because it is the transition where the concerns lie. To have all the right flavours for those children at that point in time. As I said before, it is to make sure that the school is ready for the child not the other way around. From what I see and what I hear, there are initiatives right across the board, not just even in the primary schools but in the secondary schools, of getting more close with the families and bringing them in and saying: "This is the concept that we have got here and this is what happens when your child leaves your care and comes into our care." So I think the dialogue is open; I have not seen anything detrimental.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

If it hits a brick wall, which it does sometimes, it will go through to the reception area within the education switchboard, it will go through to the admissions team who then will have a conversation with me, most likely, if there seems to be a bit of an impasse between parents' perspectives on readiness and the department's position around admission. It is interesting, one of the beauties of working in Jersey, because we are so small we can meet every single parent who has an issue in relation to this. It does not mean they will like the conclusion, necessarily, but we can put a lot of work into each case.

**Chief Education Officer:**

If necessary I see parents directly. Quite often by the time they come to me there is a real issue but I am more than happy to see parents one-to-one, and do on a regular basis. I usually have Cliff with me.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So there are no specific mechanisms then for getting the parents' views on readiness, it is just down to the communication and the foundations that are there between the school and the parents. Is that right?

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes, I think it is really important for that relationship to be between the school and the parents of the children and the department sits back and lets that happen. We set a framework but then, if they hit a brick wall, that is when we can intervene more readily and perhaps that is right.

**The Minister for Education:**

I think it goes back to the point the professor was making: I am more than happy to increase the communications in some ways but I do not want to adopt policies that will become ...

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

That restrict, no.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

Let us not underestimate the volume of communication at nursery between parents and the nursery class; it includes a lot of communication.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, I remember writing newsletters every week.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Do you want me to look at number 8?

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I think we might just do one more question then we will have a break.

**Professor E. Wood:**

I am going to switch attention to gender differences. Are there any gender differences in attainment that are evident by the age of 5 in Jersey?

**The Minister for Education:**

If I could ask Julian to answer that question.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

I had some information shared with me but it might take me a minute to pull this one off.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Would you rather we waited and had a break now?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

That might be handy.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

We can do that; that is fine.

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes, okay. That is lovely, thank you.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

It is just about 10 past now, shall we say come back at 20 past, is that enough time for everybody? If the room does not mind, if everybody does not mind, could we please clear the room so that the panel can have some discussions? I think if the public need to use facilities, are they available to the public, Mick?

**Scrutiny Officer:**

Just down the hall.

**The Minister for Education:**

Just on the right as you go out.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, down the hall if anybody needs, and thank you so far.

[11:10]

ADJOURNMENT

[11:24]

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I have been told to speed up the questions a little bit.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Concise answers, please.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So, question 8, and it is Professor Wood again, please.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Just coming back to whether there are any gender differences in attainment which are evident by the age of 5 in Jersey.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

This is concise because it is headline data and it has been provided by the Early Years team. Can I read it out? It would be much easier; it is not very long.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, please.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

It speaks for itself. You will not be surprised by this. So: "Gender differences that are apparent include the following: girls tend to demonstrate more maturity, empathy and understanding of their own feelings and those of others." You will not be too surprised by that: "Boys will show a preference for more active outdoor learning opportunities and thrive on the rough and tumble play, physical challenges and large-scale activities in our schools." Finally: "Girls show" as expected: "developing more quickly in literacy, personal, social and emotional development and communication and language." It sounds like girls progress slightly quicker than boys by the age of ...

**Professor E. Wood:**

Is that evident in your scores, your foundation stage profile of the schools?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

Yes, they are pulled out of reports of foundation stage profile across all schools.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Thank you. Do you know whether there is anything being done by teachers to address the gender differences in achievement?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

I do not know the answer to that, sorry.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Okay.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

Rather than the gender issues, it is about individual children. So when they have those sessions, have those profiles for the children, planning around meeting those children's needs is very specific to individual children. So have we got something in place to specifically identify different gender issues? I do not think so. But when we go into every individual class I would expect to see something in place for every child to address their needs based on their attainment.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Right, okay. Thank you.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

So based on that evidence, Minister, do you think that we should have differentiated starting ages for boys and girls, seeing as we know there is a difference?

**The Minister for Education:**

Well, I think it has been answered very clearly by my colleague: the evidence shows that we base it on the actual children and looking at their situation, so at this moment in time we would not be looking at differentiating.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

What is the purpose of that data then if we do not use it to assist?

**Chief Education Officer:**

Well, we do, but the point Cliff is making is rather than take the data and then have just a blanket different approach for boys and girls, what we do is take the data and apply it to each individual child so that when, for example, Julian was talking about girls tend to demonstrate greater empathy and understanding, when you are dealing with boys then, that would be taken into account in their individual planning. So it is used but on an individual basis rather than specifically to do with gender.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

As the boys and girls go through the years at school as well more generalised solutions can be found, for example around boys' literacy, and you could go into key stage 2 and key stage 3 and you will find solutions which are gender-targeted because there is far more concrete evidence about the collective need; virtually, it is down to the individual child at that age.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Do you think that childhood help needs to come earlier?

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

I think you would find where the need is identified and the need is addressed, so it is not a case of earlier it is a case of when it is needed.

**Chief Education Officer:**

The longer the children are in the system the narrower the gap becomes. There is still a gap even at G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) because girls are still more mature than boys: 16 going on 18; boys are 16 going on 12. But the gap does close.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, thank you.

**Chief Education Officer:**

It finally closes when we are about 47, I think.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

I have not caught my wife up yet.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Right. Thank you for that. Any more on that one? Okay, lovely. We have touched on this; I think, with the first question you answered, this one about how frequently the school starting age is challenged. Can I ask, following that, when it is challenged, what options are there available to parents if they believe their child is not ready to start when the law requires, or if indeed there is an assessment by the school or the teachers that the child is not quite ready? What options are there for those children?

**The Minister for Education:**

Well, just to go back again, so generally I think the figures have been about 3, in terms of it is a very low per cent of the cohort that we have had, again, it goes through to our reception. That is then passed on to one of our colleagues where generally it would end up at Julian's door to have a conversation with the parents of that particular child. Again, the reference first of all would be for Julian to suggest for them to go and have a look at the school and talk to the heads and the teachers who would understand precisely what the child's needs are at that particular point.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

But looking at examples of the length of the school day, part of the school day, what time they come in, do the parents stay for a time. I mean, the heads and the classroom teachers are very flexible at trying to meet that child's needs. So I can think of examples in the last 2 years where flexibility has been put in place.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

I always advise parents around when statutory school age kicks in, which is the term they turn 5. So if it was a summer birthday, for example, and they could start in the summer term, that is

absolutely fine. But you are right, parents often do not know that and they are quite relieved, because obviously 2 terms is a long time in a little child's life. So they are made aware of that.

**Chief Education Officer:**

To give you some idea, because there are so few in any particular year group, and I have got a little bit of data here you might find helpful: so if you take from reception right through to year 11, so the whole of our compulsory system where those kids have placed, we have 9 that are in a chronological age outside of the year group because of medical conditions, we have 5 because of developmental delay, 4 because of prematurity, one because of special educational needs, 9 because of marked social immaturity with developmental delay or special educational needs, and 2 simply because they have come from a different educational system and therefore need to go back. So that is 5 to 16, so very small numbers. But then in the system as a whole those numbers do build. So there is some flexibility there.

[11:30]

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Julian, I think you said that usually when parents come to speak to you, you can help them to understand what happens and they usually end up being happy with what is offered. You said that sometimes, very rarely, it does become an impasse, or was that with the school choice?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

No, there can be an impasse where we just do not agree, and that is fine.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes. What happens if ...

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

Then it is a question of taking the policy on keeping children back a chronological year, and there are some pretty clear criteria around when that might or might not be applied. Being a summer birthday is not a criteria but it is very usual I get that question asked of me. So then it is a question of sitting down with parents, looking through the policy, working out which conditions might or might not apply, and seeing if there is a case to be answered because, if there is not, there is probably not a lot of point in you going through the process. People can choose to appeal as they feel appropriate. But if there is a case to be answered it is about involving the right professionals, which is the school, often someone from the educational psychology team, well, always someone from the educational psychology team, and if there are other professionals ...

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Is that like an appeal, then?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

No, at this stage it is really a question of pulling in key individuals who might have a view on this. It might be the school's psychologist, perhaps often the pre-school support service, the school themselves and the parents. Essentially, we are getting a collective view on the kind of benefits and costs potentially of making a decision around this, and it is within the gift of that group to make a decision around whether the policy should be applied and the request or recommendation should be that the child is kept back. It is a shared decision and it is held in the school where the child will be placed.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

There is an appeal process post that decision, though, if the parents do not agree.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

How does that work?

**The Minister for Education:**

They would appeal directly to the minister and then we would hear that appeal.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

The appeal process is the same for whatever appeal, across our service.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So, Minister, if it got to the point where this process had been followed and the parents still felt that the child was not ready or that, for whatever their parenting ethos was that they wanted the child to be held back, what would happen then? Would you force the child to go to school, as per the law, or what would happen?

**The Minister for Education:**

Well, on any appeal, I mean, it is a case-by-case situation, is it not? I would obviously take the advice of my professional colleagues but I would equally listen to the parents. It is like any appeal. I have just finished 4 days of whole-year appeals and that is listening to and weighing up in the balance who is going to benefit. For me it is always looking very closely at what the child's circumstances are. I cannot prejudge, I would not know. I have never done one of these appeals yet, and so that is an example.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, but you have the option; even if the child does not fall within these categories, you do have the option?

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Can you see that if there are calls from more parents, and it seems to be that this is something that parents want, could you see that you would start to make that judgment more often, if it was something that parents wanted?

**The Minister for Education:**

Possibly. I do not know, is the answer.

**Chief Education Officer:**

It is right that we do not take these decisions lightly because we do need to guard against parents who just want their child to be the oldest not the youngest in a class and I think there is a bit of that here. We also need to make sure that when children get to the age of 16 they cannot leave school without having sat G.C.S.E.s. There are a whole range of issues around this, so I think it is right that we need to be careful in making those decisions.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

We will come back to that one later on. Sorry, let me just gather my thoughts on this, unless anybody wants to jump in?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

No, let us crack on.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

So, following that answer, just out of curiosity, who knows best, then?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

In terms of?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

In terms of the best for the child.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

Well I can try and answer that but there is no right or wrong.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

It seems like a very difficult answer from what I am hearing, but in terms of the construct between parents and government in terms of determining the best for that child, I get the feeling that it is very one-sided at the moment and that there is not a great deal of that construct. So I would just like to understand who knows best?

**The Minister for Education:**

What is your evidence based on where you feel it is one-sided?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I get the feeling from the answers; I do not have the evidence there.

**The Minister for Education:**

So it is an intuitive thing?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

That is just a purely intuitive thing from the answers that I am hearing; it is just how I am feeling at this present time. So I just want to understand who knows best what is best for the child?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

Well it is a tricky one just by how it feels, and I appreciate it might feel quite department-heavy. Do you know, we are a pretty gentle bunch and I do not particularly enjoy these conversations with parents because they are really emotive. I always start the conversation, because it normally starts with me, along the lines of: "I am really here to get this right for your child and to help you make the right decision." So despite how it sounds, it is quite a democratic process and the parents are persisting and they have good views around it. It is not my decision; my name is on the policy, or my title is. It does go into schools, so you would expect to have well-evidenced views about such things and an ability to respond to kids. It does go into another educational psychologist, not myself, it does go into the parents, and it all goes into the mix. It feels quite fair to me despite how it may sound in terms of sharing it to you. The proof of the pudding is in the eating; if every parent on the Island said: "That principal psychologist is a terribly autocratic man" then probably I would reflect on my practice a bit.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I have not heard anybody say that of you.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

Also positive evidence is the Minister has not heard an appeal. So it is a process that Julian goes through with the school and the family. The fact that there has not been an appeal in this Minister's time tells you that we have resolved the issues.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

It is just trying to get the understanding rather than data and assessments and: "This happens and that happens" it is just to understand that there is the emotional part taken into account, which is quite important, I think.

**The Minister for Education:**

There is, and in my past experience I have done all of the appeals related to nursery and reception, whole-year; all those kind of things. I did it when the previous Minister was in; he opted not to do it so I did it along with the other Deputy. This year I have done them all so I have physical practice of understanding the emotional content that these appeals can have.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I think as a panel what we were trying to resolve, which is an impossible question it seems to us and which we are hoping we can get to the bottom of, is that when you look at the Education (Jersey) Law, I do not know if you have it in front of you, part 4 Article 12, there are 2 Articles side by side there, 11 is the duty of you as the Minister: "To ensure that there is available to every child of compulsory school age education appropriate to the child's age, ability and aptitude." So there is obviously a judgment to be made there, but then straight away after that, Article 12, the parent has the same duty, and we are wondering what happens when the judgment made by the Minister is different to the judgment made by the parent. So the parent also has a duty by law to ensure that their child receives fulltime education appropriate to the child's age, ability and aptitude. It does not say in the law who decides that and who makes that judgment, so this is what we are trying to resolve, and maybe you can help us. Perhaps it is something that needs to be looked at.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

I think it is resolutions with consultation. I think what is known these days as the culture by department is the accessibility. Looking around this table, we all see parents on a regular basis, whatever the issue, and the fact is, as I said before, there has not been a single appeal. In other words there has not been a decision made where the parents yet have taken the decision ... well, there may be some in the pipeline but we have not come across them.

**Chief Education Officer:**

We also have to guard against ... I will give you an example: we have a parent at the moment who is very keen to get a decision to hold their child back. The child is 2. You know, we cannot possibly know right now that that child will not be ready to start school in a few years' time. So we are saying we are not going to engage in that conversation until we have got more informed reasons. These are very important decisions and we need to make sure parents are making them for the right reasons and informed reasons. Making a decision when the child is one, 2, is just too early.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

It is difficult though, is it not? Because without going into individual cases, as an individual I could have a certain opinion about whether those choices were right or wrong for any parents who were making those choices, but that is not my choice. As Minister, is that your choice to say whether their parenting choices are right or not, or does the parent have ultimate responsibility for making that decision however much evidence you have to say to them this is not the best for their child? How much autonomy do parents have in making parenting choices that go with their own ethos? I am very much playing devil's advocate here.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes. At the moment the law is they have to start at compulsory school age, unless we change the law. I think there is a good reason for parents deciding when their children start; I think that is important. As I say, I think the debate needs to be what we do with those children when they are here. If you have a starting date some children are going to be the youngest, some children will be the oldest in the year group and they have to draw the line somewhere. The other thing is it does come down to the practical considerations too. If we had a sliding scale in terms of parents choosing, say, over an 18 month period or so, it would cause chaos in the sense of allocations to the schools and the school system itself would struggle to cope. So there are some practical issues as well.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

Interestingly, of all the parents who chose to educate their boys and girls at home, not one of those decisions was around about they did not like the decision we had made about what school was offered or what age they had to go to school, it was about a different level of choice entirely.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, so it is very rare that there are problems.

**Chief Education Officer:**

We are talking here about very, very small numbers, and what we have done is set ourselves up to be as thoughtful and careful about it as possible.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Minister, what do you believe that parents really want from schools generally for children of this age, then?

**The Minister for Education:**

First of all, it was highlighted to me by a head who once said when I first visited that, you know, there are only 2 things that children remember in their education ...

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

As succinctly as possible.

**The Minister for Education:**

... the good stuff and the bad stuff, and it is our job to give them the good stuff. At that age it is that process, is it not? It is beginning those first few steps as they head towards a much more comprehensive education. It is about emotional wellbeing, is really where I would place it.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

What evidence do you have that you are delivering what parents want for their children?

**The Minister for Education:**

I think, as Cliff has already said, Mr. Chipperfield, we do not have the opposite evidence to show that we are not, effectively.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Is this something that will be part of your parents' forum? I know you are saying there is no negative evidence, but will you be making more of an effort to get feedback on this?

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

The main purpose of a parents' forum is that ... while we have a culture where there will be parents who are reluctant to take that big step to come up to the department and talk to an officer, so we are going to empower that group of parents, we will train that group of parents so they become specialists in our business so that parents, whatever their question, have other parents to go to and ask those questions and get the answer. But that parents' forum will also advise; there is a committee above that where the parents outnumber us so we get feedback on what the parents are saying. So if what we are doing is not meeting the needs of parents in our community, we can

reflect on that and we can feed that back. The forum we are setting up is not just Education; Health and Social Services and Social Security are also sitting on that forum, because around special needs all 3 of those departments have major interaction with those families. So we will be training those parents about what we do and how we do it, they can then be approached in a non-threatening, very informal way by other parents. So when you have that first question, so when, as Justin said, we move through the parent partnership or across all ages, all needs, again we have that piece of work to do to train those parents but then they have that forum to go and ask those questions. So, a lot of the things you are asking about today I do believe the forum and the parent partnership will provide a structure that is non-threatening, relaxed, informal. We already know how much the website is going to cost, so they will be placed then to be able to ask the questions without even having to front up. So I think things are in place. Sorry, it was not a concise answer.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Thank you. Shall we move on, I think? Thank you. We are going back to number 3 and 10 and 11 together, I think. Yes, we have still got quite a few questions so let us try and speed up a bit.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

In England, they are looking at starting children in reception a year later if required by the parents. What problems would this cause if introduced in Jersey?

**The Minister for Education:**

I think it is a matter of capacity, so I am going to ask Keith.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

It might be better if I could give you some hand-outs for this so I can explain that. Is that okay?

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, thank you. I do not know if we are going to be finished by 12. Can we stay an extra 15?

**Scrutiny Officer:**

Yes, that is fine.

[11:45]

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Okay, what I will do, I will take you through how we do it now and how this could look if we were to introduce the opportunity, if you were born between April and August, to defer for a year. So, the

first page, 1st September 2016, so that is the reception cohort which is going to go into the system. The cohort size is everyone at private schools and then you have got a non-fee paying sector size of 940. So that is the number of pupils that we place. There are going to be 33 classes and the average class size is 27.7. Now, that is a big year, this is the bulge year. So normally that is higher than normal, that class size, and also the number of classes is higher and that takes into account the fact we are opening Springfield, Bel Royal, Plat Douet and D'Auvergne. But just to give a bit of context about this, and I know a number of you will have heard the debates going back in terms of the capital programme, previous M.T.F.P. We have been planning for this for 4 years to get this right at this point in time. So we saw there was a spike in births so we have gone out and built classrooms and then we have put money in to recruit the teachers for those classes. But if you turn the page and look at the position next year, so in terms of our planning, we can see there is a cohort size, if you look at the top line, of 1,031, of which 781 will be in the non-fee paying sector that we will need to find places for. So we are anticipating there will be 30 classes and there is an average class size of 26, which is what we are aiming to do. Now, if you look at the number of children that could potentially defer, being born between April and August, it is 325. So it is any number within that of the children that could defer, okay? So, what I have done below then is just taken multiples of 26 of children who could defer and how that would impact on the size of the cohort for that year, because if this was the first year this was to happen, obviously you have got no deferring from previous years, this is the first year of deferring. What you will see as you go across, you end up with a range of different average class sizes, okay, and the numbers will always go down because it is children who are going to be deferring to the following year. Does that all make sense?

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Kind of.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Okay, if we work across then, you have got the first line in white, there are no children deferred, which is the position which we are always in, you have got to find 781 places. We are planning 30 classes at our average class size of 26, okay? If you go down, there are no children who are going to be coming back from the previous year because this is the first year we have done it. So if 26 children deferred the following year we would have to find places for 755 children. We are still going to have 30 classes, because that is how many teachers we have in our system, and we planned for, et cetera. That will give us an average class size of 25, okay? You just work down the list. So if 300 children decided to defer; so all of these parents see this as an opportunity to defer for a year, we would have a cohort size in our schools of 481, giving a class size of 16. Okay? So that would be the first year, potentially. The first year impact is anywhere within that scale; that is what I have tried to show.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes. Okay, thank you.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Does that make sense?

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

It does, yes.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Okay, so let us move on to the following year, this is where it gets a bit more complex, but it is the same principle of what I have just said. So, in fact, the September 2017, September 2018 cohort sizes are very similar; there is only one difference in terms of what we are planning for. So, cohort size of 1,032, a non-fee paying sector of 782 this time, 30 classes is what we have planned for, giving an average class size of just over 26. Within that year group there is an opportunity for 326 children to defer, okay? So, if we take the first set of boxes below, this assumes that no children will defer from that year. However, you have got to accommodate all the children who deferred from the previous year. This is just illustrative, what I am showing; I am not saying this is going to happen I am just saying it is illustrative. So you have got your 26 children coming back in, on that line, which gives you a non-fee paying sector size of 808, you have got 30 classes you have planned, and straight away you start seeing your average class sizes rising, yes? If you work down those boxes, say you had 300 children who deferred the previous year and none are deferring that year, you have got to then find spaces for 1,082 children. With your 30 classes, that gives you a class size of 36, which is really big. Now if we wanted to keep class sizes at 26 we would have to employ more teachers. So you would have to find 42 classes and we have not got 42 classes. You would have to go through a building programme, as you know, to accommodate the bulge year this year, okay? So that is kind of a ...

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

That is very comprehensive.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

So your problems would really be the ability to plan proportionately to the number of children coming in, especially if there is a boom year like we have had.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Absolutely. I will just go through the next bit and see if I can go along that for you. The middle box is the ideal, okay? You will see that the class size remains at 26. You have got the same number deferring and the same number coming back in, yes? That is all that shows. In reality it is the bottom box, is what would happen. You are going to have a mixture of numbers deferring and a mixture of numbers coming back into the system. So if you work across, you have got 26 who have deferred from the previous year but then you have got 78 going out so that means you have got 730 places. So in that year your class sizes would be 24. However, if you go down a few rows, if you had 104 coming in but only 52 coming out, you would have to find 834 places, which then means your class sizes are nearly 29. That is the problem we would have: that anywhere between, say, 25 and 34 in terms of average class size from what I have shown, that could materialise, and we have no way of knowing whether that is going to happen. Then if you want to keep your class sizes at 26 you will either have to build more classes, you would have to employ more teachers as well, but this is also short-term. As you know, within our planning cycle and our M.T.F.P. and in the example I gave at the beginning, this was 4 years in the planning to get to where we are at the moment. So that is the problem we have, it could be anywhere and it will change year on year. I just want to take this a bit further and explain what would happen at a local school level because these are overall numbers, okay, and even if they were low ... well, they could be quite high in certain schools in certain years, but the example I have given on the next page is of St. Martin School, and this is the right example. September 2016, if we read from left to right, we have got 28 predicted in our reception class and, out of those 28, all were first choice applications: either a special needs case, they have got a sibling or they live in catchment. This is not just applicable to St. Martins, this is applicable to Les Landes, Mont Nicolle, Springfield, St. John's, St. Luke's, St. Martin's, St. Peter's, Trinity, St. Saviour and St. Clement, so pretty much the one-form entries they get very, very full, even in future years. It is not just a bulge year thing, okay? So if we work down to next year where it is the first opportunity for children to defer. We reckon then it is about 12 out of the 28 could defer, that would fit the numbers. You have got 8 children, say, deferring from that year. So then you would have a class of 20 that year, which is nice and small. However, the following year, if those 8 children then come back but only 4 defer, then you would have to find placements for 32 priority cases, which would mean you would deny parents that live in catchment the opportunity to go to their catchment school, and that will vary year-on-year across a number of schools. So although on the pages before you could have this really difficult situation where you would have huge numbers you have got to plan for, even if those numbers were not great and were much smaller, at a school level it would really impact on those parents that may not have chosen to take this up but are just following the chronological age, and that is the challenge that we would have.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So you are not just balancing the Minister's view on what is best for children and the parents' view in individual cases on what is best, you are balancing a group of parents and another group of parents what is best for those children within the practicalities?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Well there could be a detrimental effect on the parent that chose not to defer and also we would have to make a decision about, if you did defer, does that give you any higher priority. Because what could happen is, thinking about how you would do this, say you did not and everyone goes into the same cohort, in the sense of at that time of application whether you deferred or not, parents could live further away and they might not get their catchment school because they deferred. That could happen as well. So, I suppose, because we are quite small in Jersey, one thing we try and do is really maximise our resources and we plan a lot and we get as much information as we can. This would cause a lot of challenges for us and there could potentially be situations where you would have big class sizes and you would have upset parents.

**The Minister for Education:**

See how we tried to make that concise?

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, there is no way you are going away at 12.00 p.m. That is really helpful. I like the way that is laid out; thank you for explaining that so we could understand the practical difficulties and the decisions that you have to make as a Minister. I can see that you are balancing the needs of the children with the limitations of physical space and staff, et cetera. Have you been able to think outside of the box at all on this? I do not know if you have had any brainstorming; are there any solutions to this at all that you have been able to think of, not that you are committing to now but just ...

**Chief Education Officer:**

The only way to incorporate this would be to try and build up, particularly over experience, roughly what the deferral rates would be, and we would basically have to employ more teachers than we need in terms of the numbers and we would have to have a more flexible capital programme. At the moment ...

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

More flexible what, sorry?

**Chief Education Officer:**

Capital programme.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Like building?

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes. One year we would have to have some classes lay empty and then we would need them. So we would have to build more flexible ... at the moment the system we have got is very efficient in the sense that, while we have very few parents not being allocated a school in catchment, I think the numbers are ...

**Minister for Education:**

There are not many.

**Chief Education Officer:**

I forget the numbers, but for those parents it is still a big issue, but the number is relatively small. We have very, very few classes with spare seats in them and therefore financially it is a very efficient system. That has been quite deliberate over the last year to try and achieve that because obviously the department is making cuts in order to sustain our demographic growth. So we have £4.3 million built into the budget between now and 2019 to cope with growth in numbers. What we would need to do is increase, we would have to go back with a further growth bid for more funding to build that flexibility in, because that £4.3 million works on the assumption that we have got a planned system that we can put in place. That is not to say it cannot be done but there is a price tag to it.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Would the price tag not also include greater nursery fees as well, because you would get more staying in the nursery system?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Well, this is where you were going to address this in another question because what this ...

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Sorry, I beg your pardon.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

All that happens here, and it depends on the point where a parent can defer, you could end up putting that difficulty back into the previous year, into the nursery system, because in a sense we do the same thing at nursery: we balance our States sector numbers. We have enough money

which we bid for for the nursery education fund, and so on. You then get fluctuations there that could cause difficulty and at the moment we only fund one year of nursery.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Why it is a particular issue here is because of the size of the cohort. When you have only got 1,000 or so children to work with, 30, 40, 50 is quite a large proportion and it soon becomes problematic. Of course, parents in the U.K. are living on the borders often to other local authorities so they have got even more choice, whereas here they do not get that choice.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

So basically with regards to financially it is efficient but in choice it is restrictive; is that an appropriate way to move forward?

**Chief Education Officer:**

The finances here work on the assumption that the great majority of children will start at the age of 5. If we change that approach there will be financial consequences.

**The Minister for Education:**

So you are extrapolating out from a very small ...

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

It comes back to the what the Minister said about you have in the law that statement about appropriate choice but, following that, the Minister has a very clear statement around providing an efficient service for the States of Jersey.

**Chief Education Officer:**

We are not suggesting this cannot be done because of the finances, what I am saying is that if we were to encourage more flexibility and allow much greater choice in starting ages there would be financial planning capital consequences.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

I think as well it is important that we would have to model it on how much it would cost to get a really pure system but you would end up impacting on those parents who cannot get the additional class sizes, increased sizes in classes or being denied your catchment place.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

What are the advantages or disadvantages in a child starting in reception when they are 5?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

It is really tricky talking about age. If we start talking about age it is a bit like looking down a telescope the wrong way really, because I could show you 2 children aged 5 who are exactly the same age chronologically but developmentally are completely different. So the concise answer for this is that if you start with developmental stages and respond to those as in our teaching and learning policy, then the children in our schools will get a high-quality teaching and learning experience and it kind of nullifies the question a bit. The question is whether you are happy with that answer. I think it is the wrong question to be asked.

[12:00]

**The Deputy of St. John:**

So if that is the wrong question to be asked then what is the purpose of a specific age requirement in the law?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

I suppose there has to be a line in the sand somewhere in terms of planning admissions.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

So it is more practicalities rather than expectations?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

No, because I do not think there is a problem to be resolved here. I am not aware of any evidence, certainly in terms of people knocking down my door saying: "We have got a problem that needs to be resolved." I am not aware of a problem in terms of achievement as we look ahead beyond the end of the foundation stage in terms of G.C.S.E.s, in terms of summer births and non-summer births having hugely discrepant outcomes. So I am not sure we are answering necessarily a problem here. If children access high-quality teaching and learning in their reception year which is developmentally sensitive and appropriate, my hope and expectation is they would try on the back of that. I think as soon as we start talking about age we are asking the wrong question here.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I do not necessarily disagree with what you are saying but it comes back to the question again that I just asked is, in agreeing that it is about the mental developmental stages of children and age is not really the appropriate question, then why have it in the law? Is it about practicalities more than expectations of the child?

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

I think there is a fundamental answer to that: the age is about the rights of a child to receive education. So if you go back historically why was the law put in place? That was to ensure children went to school, so whether you go or not, that is the first principle of stating an age.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

But now it is more about practicalities.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes, I think bringing the 2 together, and this goes back to what we were saying earlier, it is not necessarily a case of the date of their birthday and when they start, it is what we do with children when we have them in front of us. In a sense, we need to put their birthday aside and develop a curriculum and teaching a pedagogy which meets the presenting needs, the developmental and educational needs of the children. We could do some interesting work here that cannot be done elsewhere. So, for example, there is a very interesting, very British problem where children reverse their 3s and 5s and 7s, particularly their 3s. Why does that not happen elsewhere? There are all sorts of interesting arguments, and there are real arguments about why that happens; I have my view, others disagree. Why do we have children in our schools, British schools, with pencil grips? In many European countries they would not know what a pencil grip was: "What on earth is that?" That is because we put pencils in our children's hands before they are able to use them properly. There are all sorts of things we do here where currently we ape English practice which, in my view, is not always good. Some of it is excellent, as you will find, but some of it is not. So I think there is an opportunity here in Jersey to be a little bit bolder about what it is we do with children, and why, when we have them in front of us. It is simply a case of carving out the time and the capacity and the expertise to come together to have that conversation.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

So, just trying to draw this together I think what Julian is saying, and I think Deputy Vallois is trying to get at, if age is the wrong concept to be talking about then why is that what the law is based on? Is there not scope for that to be different, for it to be based upon the readiness of the child, if age is not a concept that you think is relevant to this issue?

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

I was not trying to completely discount all age parameters; that would be a little bit naïve and certainly does not manage admissions into schools, I have to admit, but it goes into the mix, as opposed to being the only question to be asked. Of course, age has a degree of bearing, Deputy, but it kind of goes alongside development as well. I did not mean to be quite so dismissive, Deputy Vallois; I hope it did not come across like that.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

No. Well, I always believe in asking the questions otherwise you will never know the answers.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

But, as I said, I can show you 10 5 year-olds of the same age and they will all be slightly different or extremely different as well.

**The Minister for Education:**

The Deputy also made a really good point about practicalities.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

That is what it comes across as to me, it is more of a practical rather than an expectation of the child. So: "The child is such an age and, therefore, they are expected to do such and such." It is about the ability of the child rather than the expectation of the child.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Having a date and a line in the sand means that all children have a right to education at some point; whether their parents like it or not, the law says you have to have an education at a certain point in time. I think that is right, I would not want to do anything to undermine that. What is important is if we are saying that is the law and you have got to turn up at school in that year it is beholden on the education service to make sure that it is ready to receive those children at whatever their developmental stage. For that, we have to know that before they arrive, and that is why we come back to the early conversation with parents and getting to know the families. I think at the moment we have too many children arriving in our Early Years provision where we do not yet have that information and in the first couple of months often we are still learning about those children's needs. A couple of months at that age is a very long period of time so the better we are at identifying learning needs before the children come anywhere near us, obviously the better. But I think having a date and a line in the sand where children are expected to turn up at school is really quite important.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Do you want me to ask the next question? I am assuming we are going to get the same answer.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

No, I think that is more about practicalities as well.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Okay. What are the advantages or disadvantage of a child starting in year one having missed the reception year?

**Chief Education Officer:**

I cannot think of any advantages to that, personally.

**The Minister for Education:**

Well, the disadvantages are social relationships are not established and that notion that we were talking about earlier, that they are better going into reception to have their needs met, is paramount at that point. So for us it is about establishing that sort of transition.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

I am not sure I can add too much, Minister. The limitations of not accessing your original peer group and falling behind socially ... not falling behind but not having the same opportunity to grow your friendships at an early stage. If I am honest, I am a bit of an advocate of I would rather summer-birthday children, where possible and appropriate, are provided for to start as early as possible from September. I appreciate the staged entry into reception but if you get your teaching and learning environment right and developmentally appropriate, start them as early as possible. I always encourage parents to do that because of the opportunities around it. I do not see many advantages to starting in year one at all.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Have you finished on that one? Anyone else?

**Chief Education Officer:**

It was not quite the same answer but it was close.

**Principal Educational Psychologist:**

Same thing, differently said.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Can I just ask you then, I cannot remember who said it, somebody said: "There has to be a line in the sand somewhere." We have seen all this data which has obviously taken you a lot of time, thank you for this, and it is very comprehensive and very helpful to us. In terms of the assumption that you have used here to create this data being that you would allow all children in that one term to be able to defer, is there a middle ground where you could still have that line in the sand? It was possibly around 31st August or 1st September; that is obviously a very black and white line at

the moment. Could that be more of a grey line and are there calculations that you could do to see whether a week either side, 2 weeks either side of that ... what impact that would have?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Yes, of course we could. We could look at the number of children born in that time. I guess you are still creating a line in the sand, though, because whatever ...

**The Minister for Education:**

Yes, that would be my point; it does not matter how you shift the parameters.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

You would then have a phone call from a parent whose child is the week before.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Well, yes, and I assume you would do the same thing that you are doing now which appears to be working.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

We have a whole process.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, but just have a little bit of flexibility, not just for holding back as well but we have seen evidence of some parents, if their child is born on 31st August and they feel their child is ready earlier. It is not just ...

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

It is interesting, if you go to Australia, for example, the whole discussion is about 31st December and 1st January because their school year is the calendar year.

**The Minister for Education:**

It is about where you draw the line in the sand and it is that sort of concept, so it does not matter, even if you described it in the way you have where you push the parameters. I think we have flexibility, and you have already heard from Julian, within the system to accommodate parental needs and children's needs in particular.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, it would be interesting to see.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

Justin read the numbers out; those exceptions are in place.

**Chief Education Officer:**

This might sound terribly naïve but in a sense if we get our Early Years practice as good as it should be so we are responding to the developmental needs of every individual child, it should not matter, parents should be unconcerned at that point. If their child is born a little earlier than the child next door, if they are confident that the school is going to take that into account in their planning then that should be reassuring for parents. The fact we have this debate is that parents are not reassured and they are not clear about what we are doing and, therefore, I think communication is the answer on that point. So it should not really matter as long as our planning is accurate.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

How do you ensure consistency of that across the schools then in terms of reassuring parents about the developmental side of their child rather than just the age?

**Chief Education Officer:**

There are certain things I am concerned about in the system, as you know, and we have talked about them, but the Early Years practice across our schools is pretty consistent, more so since we have now got a head of service who is working across the schools. They work very closely together: they share practice, they share assessment materials. One of the reasons we have managed to develop a coherent assessment framework for key stage one is because the schools work closely together. Our moderation processes are pretty sophisticated; they have to be because we do not have Ofsted and we do not have other things, and so we have put a lot of time and effort into moderating. So I think consistency across the Island is pretty good; it is one of the things which is a key strength and has been for a few years.

**The Minister for Education:**

The discussion is open, and I think is under appendix 2, the teaching for learning policy, that you have documents and policies across that where you can tap in.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay. Right, where are we?

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Twelve I can deal with quickly, Chairman, if I could?

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Should there be more provision for nursery education physically attached to primary schools? You said ideally yes. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Chief Education Officer:**

The answer to that is yes.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

What liaison is there with the private sector?

**Chief Education Officer:**

Regular, constant, so we have the Jersey Association we meet with very regularly.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

The J.E.Y.A. (Jersey Early Years Association).

**Chief Education Officer:**

J.E.Y.A.; we are meeting, in fact, on Wednesday. They work very closely with the team at the centre, the commercial providers ...

**The Deputy of St. John:**

That is all heads of private nurseries in that, is it not?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Yes, and owners and managers.

**Chief Education Officer:**

Yes, and owners, meet quite regularly. They work very well together; despite being in commercial competition with each other they nevertheless work very well together.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Can you just explain to us what control does the Minister have over private nurseries, if any?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

They are regulated and they have administration rules, and there is a childcare registration team as well that go around and regulate on an annual basis all those nurseries, and also part of their role is the development side and that is where we have seen some really good ground, particularly with the Early Years team in schools and in the private sector. That is something we have seen an improvement on in the last year.

**Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

You have spoken about the transition period between private nurseries and schools, you have identified that some greater work could be done there. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Chief Education Officer:**

No.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I do want to ask something on that one. I think somebody touched on it before on visits to private nurseries. What happens? Do the reception teachers go and visit the nurseries?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Yes, they do.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Is that every reception teacher goes to every nursery of every child that is coming into their class?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Well they should do, yes, as part of the transition arrangement.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Does that happen consistently across all the schools?

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

I am pretty sure it does, yes. It takes up a chunk of the summer term for that reception teacher where they have not got nursery, but there is usually a team of them.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

In terms of the allocation of places, the schools like it as early as we can do it in that spring term because it gives that time. For that reason, yes.

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

Do not forget though, for those with special needs there is a very formal panel for preschool, so any boys and girls that from birth we know about, we are planning their integration into our nurseries right from the word go.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Yes, okay.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Can I just ask, do you have any oversight of the qualifications of staff for children under 5 in your private and maintained sectors?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Yes, it is all part of the registration process, yes.

**Professor E. Wood:**

So parents would know, for example, whether they were placing their child with a qualified teacher, whether that was in a private provider or in the state sector?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

It is not a requirement for there to be a qualified teacher, there is no requirement within the private sector.

**Professor E. Wood:**

It is not in the private sector?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

No, but some do have in private, and it would be up to the nursery then to supply that.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Is it a requirement in the maintained sector to have a qualified teacher?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Yes, it is.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Thank you.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay. I think it is Professor Wood again now, if you want to continue?

**Professor E. Wood:**

Okay. What flexibility do schools have for sustaining the more flexible approaches in the Early Years foundation stage into the first term of year one?

[12:15]

**Chief Education Officer:**

It is absolutely in the schools' hands to do that and they are encouraged to do exactly that. So the framework that we have developed with schools builds that flexibility, and particularly in the first term, or longer if necessary, but the assumption is that first term. It does vary from school to school, the extent to which they take that flexibility up, but they are all encouraged to do so.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Do you know at what stage in that year does early childhood education become more formal?

**Chief Education Officer:**

It will depend on the cohort going through, so that again is left to schools to take that forward.

**Professor E. Wood:**

So that would not be at the same point in every school, there is a discretion?

**Chief Education Officer:**

No, it would vary depending on that particular group of children going through. In one school it may vary from year to year, in fact.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Is there any flexibility for those children who are not ready for the transition into year one?

**Chief Education Officer:**

To remain in reception?

**Professor E. Wood:**

Either to remain in reception, or how is that catered for if they do make the transition?

**Assistant Director, Inclusion and Family Support:**

There are 2 ends to it, are there not? I know in the reception year there is transition to work between the reception teacher and the year one teacher in terms of the environment they are moving into and the style of learning. But I have quite often seen in year one classes differentiations at that point where for that group of young children their learning is delivered in a very different way to those who are more adapted to the formal year one approach. There are not many schools where the year one class is not very close, or next to, the reception class.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Okay, thank you.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

We should have finished by now; can you stay for another short amount of time?

**The Minister for Education:**

Five minutes, if you can. Thank you.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Okay, we are going to skip question 14, I think we have covered that completely. If we go to question 15 and try and be quite brief.

**Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

How do the Minister and the department respond to statistical evidence that shows that some summer-born children have different levels of achievement and therefore there could be sustained disadvantage from that?

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

There is another handout for you, if it will help.

**Professor E. Wood:**

For the parents who came to our open evening I think this is one of the issues that was concerning them the most: that their children would be at a disadvantage and that that disadvantage would be sustained.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

We have done some analysis of it and I can give you some figures. We have looked at end of key stage 1, key stage 2 and G.C.S.E.. If we start with G.C.S.E., and if we work backwards that is probably the best way. It is the first graph you have got. In terms of achieving 5 A stars to C including English and Maths, when we looked at the 3-year average for the last 3 cohorts that

have gone through, we found there is just around about a 2 per cent difference between summer and winter. In terms of progress you see there a slightly higher progress in English for winter-born and slightly higher summer-born progress for maths, but it kind of evens itself out in terms of progress. So that is what we found, I do not know if that is consistent with the U.K.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Is that statistically significant?

**Chief Education Officer:**

It is broadly in line with U.K.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

That is G.C.S.E. If we then go to key stage 2 and we look at attainment in key stage 2, reading, writing and mathematics, achieving level 4. For 3 years again we did the same thing. It was virtually the same: reading, 90 per cent achieved level 4 in reading and 91 per cent not summer-born. Writing is 85 per cent summer-born; 86 not summer-born. Mathematics, 80 summer-born, 90 not summer-born. So again quite similar, and of course we have done it over a 3-year average, which is quite a good indicator there. There was more of difference though in achieving level 5. I will go again across the scoring, I have not put the numbers on here but it is 41 percent achieved level 5 in reading compared to 50 per cent who were not summer-born, 29 per cent for writing compared to 36 per cent for not summer-born, and 34 per cent mathematics compared to 42 per cent not summer-born. When we look at progress, and we are looking at 2 levels of progress achieving, we only had for 2 years on this, again they were quite similar. So in terms of relationship between summer and not summer in terms of the amount of progress made, it is similar across all of the key stages. Then when we looked at key stage 1, achieving in level 2, in terms of reading, writing and mathematics, I will go with not summer-born first, then summer-born. So in terms of reading ... sorry, I do not have a graph. Again, it is 88 percent to 84 percent, so a slightly bigger difference there, 4 per cent. Writing was 86 per cent to 81 per cent, that is 5 per cent, but mathematics 92 per cent to 90 per cent; that was in terms of achieving level 2. So there is a bit of a gap there I suppose at key stage 1, it narrows to key stage 2 and it is pretty similar at G.C.S.E. One thing I would say about G.C.S.E.: in 2014 we found that in terms of 5 A star to C including English and maths, summer-born children outperformed non-summer-born children, so it fluctuated.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Some of the parents we have spoken to have accessed information ... maybe perhaps about other jurisdictions; is there a way you can make this available in an understandable format to maybe challenge some of those perceptions?

**The Minister for Education:**

That is a good point.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

We are going through that process at the moment. In terms of Island-wide results we have a publication for the G.C.S.E.s but in terms of secondary school results a template with a detailed analysis of their G.C.S.E. breakdown is going to be on their websites in the next few weeks. It is a project we are working on at the moment. At the moment you get that in primary schools, if you go and have a look, and it will be the same for secondary schools very shortly.

**Chief Education Officer:**

We do provide all this information in detail; we get the media in and we put out stats personally in front of them and talk them through all of this data very, very carefully. So it is available, and it is available on our websites.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Thank you. That makes very interesting reading juxtaposed with the concerns expressed by some parents who were worried about the higher rate of summer-born children being diagnosed with special educational needs, their performance on tests, their capability in sport, their competitiveness. So there is a range of very strongly-held anxieties that I think are being fuelled by data and evidence that is coming from different bits of the universe.

**Director, Policy and Planning:**

Yes, I guess if we were asked to look at other measures we would. Obviously I have just given you a few measures there but it does give a bit of an indication of a theme, obviously.

**Professor E. Wood:**

Thank you.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I do not know if we should leave the rest. I think we have covered most of the things.

**The Minister for Education:**

If there is anything else you can always come back and ask us; you know our dialogue is open.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I will come knocking on your door. Okay, well, Minister, before we do finish is there anything that you would like to add to anything that has been discussed today?

**The Minister for Education:**

No, I would just like to thank my team for doing such a comprehensive job to provide you with the information. As I think you see, we are on track to opening up the channels of communication. Professor, I believe you are going to meet with the team perhaps tomorrow, so the more we can learn from the experience the better, really.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I will add my thanks to your team as well. We have had some comprehensive data here and comprehensive answers, so thank you very much for your efforts there. Thanks to my own team as well and particularly Professor Wood for her expert assistance; we are very lucky to have her. I will draw the hearing to a close. Thank you very much, everybody.

[12:23]