



Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Education

Friday, 15th May 2020

Panel:

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

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John

Deputy R.E. Huelin of St. Peter

Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier

Witnesses:

Senator T.A. Vallois, The Minister for Education

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour, Assistant Minister for Education

Mr. M. Rogers, Director General, Children and Young People, Education and Skills

Mr. K. Posner, Director of Policy and Planning, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

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

Ms. S. Famili, Director, Children and Young People, Education and Skills

Mr. J. Williams, Director, Business Change

[10:03]

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

Good morning, and welcome to the quarterly hearing related to COVID-19 of the Minister for Education. We have got quite a few people in this meeting. Welcome anybody who is online watching and this will be available to view later if at any time you have any connection issues, et cetera. I think perhaps we should just briefly introduce who is in the meeting so that people are aware, particularly in this format. I am Deputy Robert Ward, I chair the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Minister, do you want to go next?

The Minister for Education:

It is Senator Tracey Vallois, Minister for Education.

Assistant Minister for Education:

Deputy Jeremy Maçon, Assistant Minister for Education.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

If we go through the panel next.

Deputy R.E. Huelin of St. Peter:

Deputy Rowland Huelin.

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John:

I am the Deputy of St. John, Trevor Pointon, a member of the panel.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Perhaps the offices can introduce themselves next as well.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Mark Rogers, director general for Children and Young People, Education and Skills.

Group Director, Education:

Sean O'Regan, group director of Education.

Director, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

Saboohi Famili, director for Skills.

Director of Policy and Planning, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

I am Keith Posner. I am the director of policy and planning at Children, Young People, Education and Skills.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

That is great, thank you very much everyone. I will just say as we go through the meeting obviously we have a huge agenda. We have sent you some questions in advance as well so we know we have got a lot to ask. If at any point I step in and try and push it along a bit I am just trying to push the meeting along, so please do not think I am being rude in any way. I will always be polite, as you know. I will start off with some questions. Obviously one of the big topics that people have a very keen interest in is school closures and opening, so if I ask the Minister to start. What plans are

there, if any, for the reopening of schools at this stage? For example, are there different scenarios being considered for different schools?

The Minister for Education:

Thank you, Chair. It is a really complex situation that we have at this moment in time but if I can give you a bit of background. So basically our officers are working on a safe exit education project. So this is exploring a number of scenarios about how or when we can reopen schools. So this will be providing me with - and I'll give you some examples - a set of principles for opening of schools and nurseries to enable increased numbers of children to attend safely; the medical evidence for opening schools and nurseries to increase numbers of children; a sequence of reopening schools and nurseries to different groups of children based on an agreed framework for prioritisation; a system-wide approach to opening schools and nurseries to increase numbers of children however enabling the development of bespoke arrangements in schools and nurseries based on their local context, so capacity and physical environment; considered research on the safe opening of schools and nurseries from other countries, factoring into planning what has been successful in similar jurisdictions; and what will be delivered to children returning to schools and nurseries in the interim and longer term. So it includes things like well-being checks.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay, I mean we understand fully how difficult the situation is and that was one of the consequences of lockdown. When you say "an agreed framework" are you referring to agreed by who? Would that be school heads, unions? I am thinking about front line teachers obviously who have to deliver the education and so on. So how is that framework going to be agreed?

The Minister for Education:

I think it is really important. I have set out a set of principles to officers specifically looking at other jurisdictions and the experience that they are having or what they are going through at the moment. Our officers are regularly meeting with all unions, not just teaching unions, but Unite and Prospect as well, to identify any of their concerns or any of their ideas. They will have principles as well that they feel are appropriate and how they can manage a situation. I think the 2 biggest concerns that I have, because of course we have to do this based on health advice, so the 2 areas within that health advice I think are going to be particularly problematic are our physical distancing and our mass gatherings. So that is of particular concern.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I would imagine then we would inevitably look at a staggered approach to reopening of schools and then effectively see how it works, see what the impact is.

The Minister for Education:

Yes, so I think that is potentially where we are finding ourselves when you are looking at some of the situations that you are finding yourselves in. I mean just to give an example, like I said, with the mass gathering and the physical distancing issues, we have in some of our secondary schools between 700, 800 children. Just giving an example, one secondary school with a 2-metre distancing requirement can fit 35 children in a hall. This is one particular school. So of course you have to take into context the physical environment and the ability to manoeuvre around within that fiscal distancing requirement. So one secondary school that I know of, for example, it is that 35 children they can about fit in a school hall but then there are about 6 in an average classroom in that school and then roughly about 8 children in a computer room. So that is just an example of some of the complexities in a secondary school. So that is just to give you some kind of visual image to understand what that looks like and what that means.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Obviously, that is going to take a lot of planning so these plans should be well in advance so will parents be told about the plans to remain closed or reopen in good time and what sort of good time are we talking about there, so that they can prepare as well, whether the children are still at home or going back perhaps even on specific days of the week, for example?

The Minister for Education:

Yes, we are absolutely mindful of the fact that we need to try and provide as much lead-in time as we can. Not just with parents but schools themselves so they can prepare appropriately. Also, you know, you may have children that feel slightly anxious about returning because there may be concerns around their own safety. So we have to take all that into context as well. But absolutely we need to ensure that we give an appropriate amount of time for people to prepare and plan.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

The schools themselves will obviously need some sort of lead-in time because there will inevitably be signage, marking of floors, being prepared with washing facilities and so on for social distancing, which will be inevitable. Will schools have adequate lead-in time for reopening and will that be consistent across all schools?

The Minister for Education:

Of course looking at the minimum standards for social distancing and hygiene practices, we have to recognise we have got the appropriate sanitation in place, the appropriate P.P.E. (personal protective equipment) with regards to the guidelines that we will have, implementation of robust risk assessments, a cleaning strategy for schools prior to opening, when open and following an outbreak if there should be one and ensure schools are organised appropriately to ensure the practice of

stringent 2-metre social distancing. There is a lot that goes into that. Of course the officers are already working directly with, like I said, the unions about how we can do that. I do not know whether Sean or Keith or Mark can add anything further to that because they have been in direct conversations with them.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Keith, do you want to step in at this point.

Director of Policy and Planning, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

All I can say to add to what the Minister has put is that we are in regular contact with unions but also head teachers in our planning. The Deputy makes a really good point concerning lead-in time and we have to be mindful that schools are going to be prepared to enable more children to come back. Schools have remained open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children too so there is some good learning that has happened there but of course, as we introduce more children and we have to adhere to the social distancing guidelines, which are set out by the medical officer of health, about putting those things into practice will take some time. I think we have had really good meetings so far. We have ongoing meetings most days now to build together what this will look like in schools.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think Deputy Maçon wants to say something.

Assistant Minister for Education:

Yes, it just goes back to the original question you asked about who it would be agreed by, and of course just to reassure the public that the first point of call of course is the clinical medical advice, which we would want to follow. We know, for example, some areas of France have been able to downgrade to a one-metre distance but including things like masks and other protective equipment for the children. But again, before we do agree with anyone else we need to get the agreement of the medical advice. That is all I wanted to add.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay, thank you for that. I reiterate we know how difficult the situation is and what we are trying to - I think we are all looking for - are some solutions that would work for everybody so we do recognise that. But in terms of safety considerations for staff, students and family members who perhaps are in high risk categories, I think about if I was being asked to go back to ... if I was still a teacher at the moment, I was given my emergency pack because I have asthma, which obviously also being a bit of a hypochondriac, that would frighten the life out of me. So I would be very conscious of this. It is always good to try and put yourself in that situation. So what will be happening to ensure the safety of staff and perhaps any staff who do not feel safe going back?

The Minister for Education:

Absolutely, I am with you on that. I, of course, have an underlying condition myself and I am currently 8 weeks into isolation. But to give you some ideas on numbers, because we have taken this very seriously, recognising the medical and health advice that has been provided and the concerns around people having underlying conditions.

[10:15]

Of course some of them may have been asked to isolate for 12 weeks because of whether it is a certain condition they have or certain drugs that they are having to take for that condition, so just to give an idea. We have got 2,047 employees and 546 have declared an underlying condition. 463 of these are in education so that is across the whole of C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills), but 463 of these are in education. At the time this data was particularly collected there were predefined conditions so we did not have the advice to collect the information about the severity of the condition. So of course we would have to go back and check that again with the health advice to make sure that we are not putting anyone in harm's way or they feel they are in harm's way and make sure we have got the appropriate support in place for them. So today we know we have 129 employees in Children, Young People, Education and Skills off due to isolating through conditions. That is just to give you a picture. I am not sure whether there is anything further that officers may want to expand on with regards to that.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sorry, I just welcome Deputy Higgins who has managed to overcome his I.T. (information technology) thing there and he is in as well. Just to say that. Sorry, Keith, carry on.

Director of Policy and Planning, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

All I was going to say, before members of staff will return who are vulnerable and have certain conditions but feel they are able to return to school, we would undertake risk assessments for them. That would have to be in place where that is discussed and to see whether it is feasible and safe for them to return.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I have to bring up something that I brought up a number of times before regards the autonomy situation because different heads do have different attitudes at times towards staff and in this situation there will be a need for consistency of support for staff. How are you ensuring that all staff are getting the same leeway in all schools? For example, if one head perhaps, just a scenario, a

harder approach to staff not wanting to come back because they feel vulnerable, is there a mechanism in place to ensure that it is fair across the education system?

The Minister for Education:

Sean, can I ask you to answer that please? It is probably best for you to direct the answer with regards to head teachers and autonomy?

Group Director, Education:

Yes, very happy to, Minister. As Keith has said, Deputy Ward, it is safety first before anybody with a self-identified underlying medical condition returns. They themselves will be asked to risk assess and then as the de facto employer on behalf of the S.E.B. (States Employment Board) our people services, our H.R. (human resources) team will lead that self-assessment. Our lead for the facilities management in health and safety, Nick Jewell, has worked up a very detailed assessment piece for as and when we are ready for the phased return of children and staff back to school. That will be across the whole system. Of course, as the Minister has said earlier, once we have got these agreed principles and the central approach we have to look school by school at how that works. It has been touched on. There is a physical dimension, the size of classrooms and size of halls and the width of corridors. More importantly, there is the human resource I mentioned because you might have a maths department with very few people who are well in one school and they are all fit and well in another. So how we make sure the learning of children carries on. It might be the virtual learning piece carries on in the school with the happen-chance of the predominant department having underlying medical conditions and face to face in other schools. It may look different school by school but exactly your point, it will be based on the health and well-being of staff and children.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

There will obviously be some limit of class size in this situation from what the Minister has said. It is logical if you measure the space and you look at how many with physical distancing that will give you a number. How are we going to ensure that that too is being adhered to across schools? Which will be very difficult, I mean do not get me wrong. So I would imagine it would be smaller class sizes as they come back. I mean some classes are around 30 in secondary schools and certainly in primary schools. They are literally side by side all the time. Have you thought about that? What approach did you put towards that in terms of class size?

Group Director, Education:

Happy to speak, Minister, if that is helpful.

The Minister for Education:

Yes, that would be helpful, Sean.

Group Director, Education:

Of course, as Keith has said, we are meeting pretty much every day, 7 days a week on this and indeed met with all 5 unions on Wednesday. Conversations with head teachers and a dedicated ministerial meeting on this exact subject this afternoon. We have sent teams out, both public health officers working full time with us on this, our colleague Nick Jewell I have mentioned, Keith as the lead, physically going into schools and doing assessments as we run the rule, as it were. So in one scenario, if a primary school year group came back, some discussions obviously about year 6 because they are the transition year, they are the young people who are predominantly 11, some of them are 10 year-olds, who will be off to secondary school in the autumn. If we bring back the year 6 class of a regular one form entry school they may need 3 classrooms for that one class to be taught. So if the school space accommodates 9 safely in a class they will be spread across 3 class of 9. If it needs 7 or 8 we would use 4 rooms and we need teachers, the sanitation piece, the toilets, the access, the egress, all being measured out, looking at it school by school. So we agree the principles, we keep everybody safe and then we mediate that school by school because, as you know, we have got an excellent built estate by and large but we have got some lovely old listed buildings that are quite compact and new build tends to be more expansive. So we apply that. Of course the final point here, the age and stage of the children is important. With very young children, our experience is we have kept nursery and reception classes in schools and indeed our valued partners in the preschool and early years sectors, the private voluntary sectors there, social distancing for very young children is difficult. So you have other mediations around masks and gloves and extensive handwashing. So the age of the child is also one of the contingencies when we look at the sizes of the class.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Would a rotation of students between home schooling and school be part of the process because obviously you cannot fit the entire school into school, and priority given to a particular year groups of being in school and having that more direct contact - obviously not direct contact - with teachers, for example.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

So all of those options are ones that will be put before the Minister. So the notion of a sort of incremental return, which you have already referred to, is clearly something that we need to be working up is one way of youngsters coming back. But also, as you said, even if we identify the best educational sequence for children to return it may be that not an entire year group or an entire cohort can return simultaneously. So as you suggested, we will need to be looking at whether there is a rotation, as you described it. I think one of the other factors that has not been referred to in terms of all the things that we need to take into account, and rotation prompts this, Deputy Ward, is

transport as well. So the way the children not literally going in and out of the school but getting to and from the school, there will be important discussions that we need to have with LibertyBus, but also with parents about how they are transporting children in their own private vehicles. All of those things mean that it is highly likely that there is an incremental return of children, that is what is happening almost everywhere else, is it not? But also that even if you ... let us say year 6 was a group that it was important to get back sooner rather than later, we may well have to do a morning and afternoon or an alternate day set of arrangements there as well, for all the reasons that have already been explained.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I have just got one more question on this topic. But I will also mention, if you look at my written question there, still paying LibertyBus for the school buses, so that might help you a little. The other part of planning, and we have to consider this, is including in a return to lockdown scenario should there be an increase in infections. So we could have students going back and we have to be prepared for that. I assume that is part of the planning process as well, the scenario of ... I mean we all hope that does not happen. We hope this goes smoothly, et cetera, but if it does, are you prepared to re-establish a lockdown very quickly with the resources that are required in place for that for home schooling? We have learnt so much about that, have we not?

The Minister for Education:

The situation is constantly fluid and of course we would have to reassess and change our direction should infection rates start to increase. I think that has been recognised from the health advice not just for education but right across the public sector and for the whole of the Island. We have to keep an eye on that. I think one of the important points as well is what one particular jurisdiction, if you look at them, for example, is New Zealand. I think one of the issues here would be contact tracing and making sure that you are aware of if there is a positive and who they have come into contact with and how they have come into contact with them to determine what your next strategy is in terms of how you put in place the right working schedule. We are improving in terms of devices for children. So we are on set ready to source all of those particular issues out. We have learnt a lot and the team have been extremely innovative, the Education Department, teachers, school staff, have been absolutely fantastic in the short timeframe they have had to try and provide a form of education the best way they can that is not in a physical setting. So I think there are things that we can learn from, we could possibly improve in areas and people may feel like they can improve in areas, or we can learn off of each other should that scenario come into effect. But I think there will be some working between the 2 like you say, because there is only going to be ... there may be staggered times depending on how our planning works and the health advice that comes back from that planning work will be dependent on how we stagger the times and who goes back, like Mark was saying and Sean was talking about. But there will have to be continued some form of home learning.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

We will come back on to online learning later but I pass on to Deputy Pointon for the next section of questions.

The Deputy of St. John:

Really questions on the same or a similar theme but I do have a question to follow on from this line of questioning that Rob has been involved with and that is: what is the real feel for the imminence or otherwise of a return to school? What is the advice being given? Because personally I have got some doubts about whether we are going to get back to school in the next couple of months even.

The Minister for Education:

If I touch on this just at a slightly high level, I stated at the beginning the 2 biggest issues that face us with regards to return to school are the physical distancing requirements and the mass gatherings piece. So if you look at the safe exit strategy that the Government put out in the different levels you will see that level one is that consideration around the changing to physical distancing. There is still discussion around what mass gatherings may or may not look like. Some jurisdictions are suggesting that you can do it only a certain number but this all has to go past the health advice and so that is from a purely high-level point of view but I am not sure whether, Mark, you want to expand on that point to give some reassurance to Deputy Pointon.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Thank you, Minister. Good morning, Deputy. So it is a difficult question to answer because of all the variables that we have already been discussing. But perhaps a place I will start is that the partial opening of schools following the initial and then subsequent closure notices that the Minister issued, has been, as you know, for critical workers and vulnerable children and we did some calculations at the outset of that to understand how many of those critical workers and vulnerable children we could admit into our schools or childcare settings.

[10:30]

Although on some individual basis we have reached the ceiling of admissions to any particular school. Overall at the moment, I believe the system is operating at about 75 per cent of the capacity that we have. So to begin to answer your question, one of the things that we can and are looking at with the Minister is the present capacity across our school estate for children is not yet reached. It is relatively close and, as I say, in the instances of some individual schools we have already had to exercise the cap either by refusing admissions or asking children to attend other settings. So it is possible at least under the present circumstances for the Minister to consider whether some further

children, either more critical worker children if that classification changes or more vulnerable children, if we get a little more insistent that they should be attending because it has been discretionary, we still have some capacity in the system now. Then of course what we are looking at is that combination of health advice, the hygiene, the social distancing, et cetera. We are looking at that alongside, first and foremost of course, the compelling education need for groups over and above critical workers and vulnerable children to get back. If the health advice comes back that we can faithfully observe all the conditions that will be laid down around social distance, good hygiene, et cetera, then of course we will start to trickle I think some more children back into school, if the Minister is satisfied that all of those conditions are adequately met. We signalled, I think, or the Minister signalled in her press statement in relation to the latest period of closure, that we would be using this time through to 1st June, effectively, after half term, to understand whether we might start to open the door ever so slightly from - I am not saying "on", I am very clearly saying "from" - the second half of the summer term. But just to go back, and be really clear, we do not have any kind of target number or target date at this stage but what we do know is that we are not operating at full capacity at the moment. I hope that is as helpful as I can be without having got to the point where the Minister has had clear advice underpinned by health advice as to what she could do next.

The Deputy of St. John:

That is reassuring, Mark, thank you. Let us move to the students. Students will have been at home for a long time and learning from home for a long time. Some of those students might well find it quite difficult going back to school. What support structures will you have in place for those who are struggling returning?

Director General, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

Sean, would you like to make a start on this one and then I am sure Keith and/or I will happily add anything else in if we need to?

Group Director, Education:

Very happy to. Good morning, Deputy Pointon. We are looking after that piece already, so whatever day or date in the phase return for a young person or child in their year group to come back partially or fully, it is not day one. We are doing checks constantly. Schools are doing welfare checks with the children through the onlining piece indirectly. Our psychology and well-being services are kept in contact with over 350 families at least weekly. Some children are getting calls daily or even twice daily, alongside social care colleagues also within C.Y.P.E.S. The Minister gave, in the principle she laid out, a very clear steer to us that we will be instituting well-being checks on children as they return. Just as, for example, when an adult has a period of time away from work you have a return-to-work interview to see how you are and to help you adjust back into the workplace, we are looking to do that with our well-developed set of emotional literacy support assistance with counsellors in

schools, with known and trusted teachers, to do a “how are you” and getting ready. Our inclusion team have been doing some work based on research from Oxford Brookes University on what might be called, their term: “We might adapt a recovery curriculum about acknowledging for children coming back that they might have had a tough time.” So, some of the trauma-informed work for those who are at the sharp end have had a difficult time in the lockdown. But for all children getting back-to-school routine, getting to know school structures, reinstating friendships, all children but especially perhaps if you are the only child in a family, a so-called only child, you have not been playing with somebody for 7 or 8 weeks because of social distancing and the lockdown. The reestablishment of friendships, so a great deal of the early work will be giving space to reconnect, relearn the structure and routine. We have just concluded a survey ourselves alongside the officers of the Children’s Commissioner and we had 2,150, I think, children and young people give us feedback. We have got a vast amount of evidence with some really granular responses that show some children have been worried and an awful lot of children are very keen to get back to school and a lot of it is around the social contact with their friends and with their teachers. At the forefront of our thinking will be that welfare piece.

The Deputy of St. John:

Sean, thank you very much for that answer and that is very fulsome and I am sure will be a source of reassurance for parents especially. I am going to hand you back now to Rob.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Just a question in regards to critical workers’ children and so on, I believe the advice changed from the beginning where it was one essential worker and then it has to be both parents and that has left some essential workers having to adapt. Given that we have got capacity, is there flexibility in the system so that if somebody is an essential worker and the other parent can now return to work, who may be able to facilitate that on a case-by-case basis? I do recognise how difficult this is and that underlines everything we are saying today, we are not trying to catch anybody out, genuinely just to try and get as best we can for people. Is that flexibility going into the system?

Director General, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

I will pick this up, Chair, if that is okay. Jonathan Williams, I think, has just had technical problems and disappeared.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, I understand, that is okay.

Director General, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

The answer is at the moment we want to stay with the criteria that we have presently been using because not all of the children that we would want to come to school are attending anyway. I think our first thoughts are in relation to there is a strict definition for a critical worker and who is eligible for school or childcare but we always remember that alongside that is this other group of vulnerable children as well. We have been concerned throughout to make sure that the original eligible groups are the ones that are given most opportunity to take advantage of either a childcare or a school setting. We have been quite firm in the line that we have taken around who is eligible. There is the ability to appeal exceptionality and we have had a number of cases that have been considered where other factors have come into play that have required us to be flexible beyond the strict criteria but we have kept that to an absolute minimum. Then as we look forwards, there will be a review of critical-worker eligibility because there should be anyway but also there will be some pressure from the business sector as it starts to open up a bit more for a review to be undertaken. But, and I emphasise the “but”, we are looking at this, as the Minister for Education has rightly pointed out, through an educational lens, not a business lens. What we want to plan for is those next groups of children who should return to school if it is at all possible because the educational case for them coming back is overwhelming. My view would be, yes, we will continue to review the criteria for critical workers but the Minister has given us a steer that whoever comes back next after critical workers and vulnerable children should come back on the basis of the education argument, not the critical worker argument. If the 2 coincide, that is fine but for us it is about identifying which children really most need to come back to school, if that is possible.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, and I can see the pressures increasing, I do not know how to put it really, as the lockdown is loosened, so to speak, and more businesses go back; you may have one worker who is an essential worker but now the other partner can go back. It is going to be a challenge, I recognise that. The fact there is a process I think it is interesting, so that will help in some ways. Deputy Pointon, I do not know if you had anything else you were wanting to ask from your section of questions.

The Deputy of St. John:

I have not, Chair.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay. I will just quickly move on then and we will do these quickly, about some areas of monitoring and progress, if schools do remain closed for the remainder of the 2020 academic year, monitoring progress, which I know is very important to schools, how will that happen, particularly for those who perhaps are moving up a key stage either into secondary school or from key stage 3 into key stage 4 or from key stage 4 into key stage 5? I recognise how difficult that is but do you have a mechanism that you think you will be using for that?

The Minister for Education:

There is a great deal going on in this area because of course there are concerns, for example, your students that may have fallen behind because they do not feel they can have some form of structure. Everyone is going to be coping with what we are experiencing with this lockdown very differently; students are no different. But in terms of how we manage this, schools have always performed a gap analysis and work to ensure pupils are provided with support for the areas they may be weaker in. We have a way of dealing with that and particularly communication is key in that area. Monitoring of students at the moment in terms of doing their home-schooling, standard assessment teams or all the team monitoring supporting schools and they are documenting the progress of this. In terms of support for students to achieve attainment levels required for subsequent stages in their education, so the transitioning pieces, teachers assess and address gaps in attainment every year. This will no doubt be a focus when pupils return with the aim of ensuring pupils are ready for the next stage in their education through gap analysis and targeted interventions. I think it will be very much based on a case-by-case basis because each individual is going to be very different. I do not know whether Sean or Mark would like to add anything further to that.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I just add to that and perhaps Sean may want to answer? The model in schools of children all progressing by a certain amount at a given rate and following flight paths and so on, is that process still going to be used, given this disruption to education and, for example, the cancelling of exams? Are we going to be more flexible with teachers because I can see an enormous amount of pressure on teachers, given that underlying theoretical model, which some might say takes away the individuality of the student?

Director General, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

Sean, do you want to pick up at this point for the Minister?

Group Director, Education:

I am happy to, Chair. Obviously this is in 2 parts, there is the area that Jersey is in charge of and the areas we are not, so the methodology for the qualifications with the cancellation of public examinations, G.C.S.E.s (General Certificate of Secondary Education), A levels of the level 2 and 3 qualifications, that is out with us. Obviously our teachers of year 11 and year 13 predominantly and the lecturers at Highlands College are following the Examination Board's rubric of how you assess, how you build on mock examinations, teacher assessment course work, to end up to the final grade. In terms of Jersey's own assessment framework that we have for both primary and secondary, that itself is predicated where teacher assessment leads the line in contrast to other jurisdictions. But you are right, we have used curriculum tests and subject-specific tests predominantly for year 6 and

year 9 students to mediate the teacher assessment to allow us to give consistency and reassurance across all schools. Those have not been put in place, so we are working with the subject specialists in our schools, heads of department, the subject leads in primary under our advisory team to capture this.

[10:45]

I think the first thinking, because we do not know when we will be out of lockdown, is we are going back to basics, which is the work children produce in workbooks online, the course work, as it were, at all ages, to do our transition piece from year 6 to year 7 teachers where we sit down and look at what the young person individually has achieved as the benchmark, as it were, on which we build progress. We know there will be a setback. There is emerging evidence from the Economic Endowment Foundation and others that some subjects have been hit harder than others by lockdown in the English-speaking world, only early evidence of that. We have to be informed by the evidence. You are quite right, we will have new transitional arrangements because the old ones are not in place for the summer of 2020.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay, that is great. A final question from me before we move on to Deputy Higgins. It was just about teachers are going to be asked to provide grades to exam boards, we know that and that is going to happen. In terms of the workload to do that for our teachers, just to recognise that they are working hard on that, what support will be given if grades are questioned by parents, both for parents and for schools because it could create some conflict perhaps in that area? Whoever you think can answer that best.

The Minister for Education:

Yes, Sean, if you could take this it would probably be best.

Group Director, Education:

Certainly and the point is well observed that the teachers of years 11 and 13 who might be doing the last of revision classes in school or managing the young people on study leave with daily tutorials and webinars and that sort of thing that will be normally happening have diverted the year 11 and 13 students. We are told by the announcement of the United Kingdom's Prime Minister of the cancellation of public exams. But those teachers are working very hard in new terrain of working to the joint Qualifications Authority's rulebook and the exam boards. It is different again for the International Baccalaureate and for Cambridge International, the organisation that runs the I.G.C.S.E.s (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) and indeed in other places at IA levels. They are following the rubric, so it is already published, although they are updating, the

Qualifications Authority in the U.K. (United Kingdom). There is an appeal process for young people or their parents who do not like the final grade given and that will be a due process under each exam board. There is the opportunity in the autumn to retake an examination and then it is my understanding and the advice is evolving, is that the young person will be able to choose the better of the 2 grades that they were awarded in the summer process, with results having being confirmed as 13th August for A levels and 20th August for G.C.S.E.s. If they do better in a formal exam in the autumn they can take that better grade, if not they revert to the one originally given and that is going to be a national picture for those exams.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It will be interesting to see what the uptake of that is, will it not?

Group Director, Education:

It is all ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, absolutely. I will just hand on then to Deputy Higgins, who has got some questions about online learning. Deputy Higgins, are you there?

Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

Yes, I am, Chair. Yes, I am very interested in what the department and the schools are doing in terms of the online tuition, to fully understand what is being offered, how it is being delivered and how it is being monitored and regulated. Could I ask the Minister just to outline what is being offered by the schools at the present time to the children who are working at home?

The Minister for Education:

Okay, so I will try and do it as quickly and clearly as I can, if that is okay, Deputy. But basically the platform or model that our education system is using, so there are various platforms. We have Google Classrooms, we have got Seesaw for primary, we have OneNote, we have Doodle and something called Pixel. There is also the Teams' offering that is continuing to be rolled out as well. Now we have a needs analysis in terms of the gaps for devices; we are identifying purchasing those. But the expected standards for online education, so there are safety guidelines that all schools have to conform to, such as not sharing the background from where you are teaching or not being able to see into a child's bedroom or living room. There are no set-up standards for online learning. All schools are following Jersey curriculum but learning is having to be adapted, for example, a year 9 Design and Tech lesson cannot be taught at home because the children do not have access to the actual industrial tools. Nevertheless, schools are trying to give children a wide range of experiences. Almost all schools, for example, are setting learning that lasts about 3 hours, with the child doing full

art work as part of the school. In effect, the child is doing about 4 to 5 hours solid work per day. All children are receiving the teaching of the core subjects, so core subjects being maths, English and science, with other subjects being managed in different ways across the week. The core is certainly minimum standards based on the Jersey curriculum but taught in a unique way. Students who do not have access to home devices are being given physical copies of sheets, books, et cetera, on a weekly basis. There are some that prefer that method in terms of hard copy. Parents are collecting these packs from school. Some parents have requested both, that is they have access to a device but also like the physical resources and schools have no problems with this. This has been going on right through the period and we have had these holidays in between of course as well. That is, in a roundabout way, an answer to your question but I am happy for any further follow-ups to that.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

No, thank you for the overview. You have mentioned the different platforms that are being offered or are being used, I should say, by the schools. Has this caused any particular technical difficulties and are all the children getting the same sort of standard of provision? In other words, if you are not using one model and you have got different models, how is the standard of delivery taking place? How good is it?

The Minister for Education:

Okay, so I think the best way I can answer this, and I will maybe pass it further on to Sean so he can give you a further insight in terms of different schools, but there is this piece around autonomy and teachers and head teachers knowing what is appropriate and correct for the children. Some children are much more vulnerable, there may be extra needs needing to be met. Some form of complete standardisation, as we always know, right across the education piece, we have guidelines, we have requirements for curriculum; we have those types of standardisation. But the autonomy piece, the piece where you are allowing a teacher to teach in a way for their children that is best for the children they know is absolutely appropriate. But I think Sean can probably give a little bit of further insight in terms of how standardisation or non-standardisation in terms of education, whether online or in physical buildings, is being met.

Group Director, Education:

Certainly, Minister, I am happy to pick up on Deputy Higgins' question. Obviously going back to 18th March when the Minister announced the imminent closure of schools physically and the move to home learning, as in teachers teaching remotely, children learning virtually at home, that was a huge shift because the normal method of teaching and learning is to gather in a classroom, classes of children, subject tutor groups with a teacher. That was done at pace and was based on the resources available to the schools. We have continued in the shutdown to develop prowess. Lots of our teachers have been trained in Google Classrooms in the primary because the general

landscape suggested secondary schools were well enabled to fully digital online learning and primary schools the more mixed economy of hard copy, as well as some online learning offer. The senior advisers in the standards and achievement team of the educational part of C.Y.P.E.S. are undertaking, as we speak, a review and have kept monitoring throughout the quality of the offer. They have physically been in schools last week and this meeting head teachers or virtually reviewing the quality of the offer and advising and, as you would expect us to do, sharing best practice. Those schools with particular champions of online learning are teaching other teachers how best to utilise, whether it is Google Classrooms, Microsoft Teams or indeed Seesaw, which is the main platform being used very, very effectively, as I am getting feedback more and more, in primary schools. This is a learning process and we will get better the longer we are in lockdown teaching in this new way.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

How is it you are monitoring how these delivery platforms are achieving in the schools? In other words, are you listening in on some of the classes and seeing what is going on, seeing the delivery or are you just taking what you have been told from the schools?

Group Director, Education:

We have got various means. On the safeguarding side our safeguarding governance leads are keeping appraised. On the technical side the educational I.T. team, part of modernisation and digital, are checking. We are also getting feedback from parents and children. As I mentioned earlier in this Scrutiny hearing, we have just had the evidence from over 2,000 children and their parents in the survey of learners and there is a great deal of information feedback about the quality and some gaps. We have had praise for certain schools and the same school getting some challenge from parents in different year groups. This is a work in progress where we are doing the challenge piece, which of course our senior advisers are skilled at doing because that is the meat and drink of their work, to not just accept what we are told but to gather evidence and cross-refer. But we are very much in support function because this is a challenging period. But we do want the best quality learning officers and children do not fall behind, especially those who might be deemed vulnerable.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can you tell me, in terms of the number of children who are using computers at home, how many are not? How many are you providing the physical packs to?

Group Director, Education:

From the outset most schools did surveys of parents about the methodology. As the Minister has said, some families prefer that children have paper and hard copy, others it may be the only thing available. Schools, from the outset, were loaning devices. We have backed that up as a department, rather than school by school, with ongoing surveys of need. We have currently

identified and are resourcing around 9 schools who said they did not have sufficient resource, as in laptops, iPads, other devices to loan to children. We are procuring devices to ensure that the longer this goes on that those young people will have a device at home to access the online learning offer; that is being done school by school. Obviously, with the usual governance about families agreeing the loan and to do their best to keep the device safe and return it but the key thing is to get more devices to children. As I say, that was predominantly done at the outset through loan systems of schools and we are backing that up where there are gaps in that resource.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can you just try and be a bit more specific in terms of numbers? I would like to get a measure of how many children do not have access to electronic devices. Because it strikes me that the ones who are online and dealing with teachers are getting a better service than the ones who are not, so just getting paper copies once a week.

Group Director, Education:

You are not going to stand out in your class. We do not have a scenario, for example, in a primary school where 25 children are online and 3 of them are not and they are getting a different offer. We do have a consistency piece and there is a challenge that is even deeper than putting a device in children's hands, which is the accessibility. The telecoms companies were very helpful in giving free broadband vouchers, again distributed through schools. The quantum you ask about, I would have to revert with the precise figures because this is dynamic but we have around 16,000 learners across our schools and college estate. It is our understanding, we are talking about in the small number of hundreds but that is a school-by-school piece and, as I say, loan devices. We have also got some very helpful third sector people. Schools regularly have P.T.A.s (Parent Teacher Associations) and charities working with them to buy additional resources, whether it is laptops or minibuses and the like. We have got a useful partnership with some entrepreneurial figures who have gone on the front foot to help resource that. We are joining this up to make sure the devices are safe to use, have the appropriate apps on them for learning. But the quantum is very small compared to the whole school population.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

In terms of the computers that are being used, what have you done to provide security for them to make sure that people are not either hacking into them or they are looking at inappropriate material?

Group Director, Education:

To be clear, as I say, we have the detailed information on this school by school. What schools have done is wiped their devices, so for example, one of our larger primary schools has a significant

resource of iPads. They wipe them, they have restored on them the learning apps for predominantly mathematics and English and for the younger children, the early years' educational applications.

[11:00]

They had a very simple, straightforward, effective home school agreement where the child and the parents agreed to use them for the purposes of and do their best to look after them and return them at the end of the loan period. Our head of governance, who oversees the safeguarding piece for devices, has made sure that all schools understand the protocols to keep children safe when using these devices.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Now, just going back to what you mentioned about landlines, we know that J.T. (Jersey Telecom) offered them, how many of the families you are dealing with have landlines? Because many people these days are just keeping a mobile phone, as opposed to having a fixed landline, so how are they getting the full provision?

Group Director, Education:

I must defer to other colleagues with technical knowledge, Deputy Higgins. On an earlier conversation we talked about welfare checks, so whether it is a landline or a mobile, obviously we can make contact with families and children to make sure they are safe. In terms of learning, as I think I referenced, even if one puts a device and has a great online learning offer, for some homes without the infrastructure it clearly shows the challenge and it is not feasible to have a completely uniform offer to every Jersey home in which children are seeking to learn from home.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can I just move on to the actual assessment and testing? How are you doing that with the material that is being given out to the students?

Group Director, Education:

As has been noted earlier in the curriculum, we are not testing children using this remote learning as of yet. In some of our schools the year 12 examinations that were already scheduled, I believe for next week, are progressing, so that is being done remotely. Teachers have been doing lessons through the various platforms the Minister shared throughout. In some cases parents are being asked to assure that the young person is going to work alone without their text books while they undertake internal examinations. That is unusual, that has not yet happened but I understand in at least one school that is pertaining for year 12 students to keep them on track, who will be moving into their final year of sixth form. Assessment is going on throughout; teachers who are working

remotely and I am sure the Scrutiny Panel members will be aware, there is a real challenge for a school to ensure online learning for all and the physical presence of teachers to the vulnerable children, children with critical workers, on site. But we are making sure that all children, whether it is online or in hard copy, are getting feedback on their work. The work is, effectively, more than marked; points of strength, points of development given, so that children can continue to learn. Broadly, assessment ongoing all the time, testing not at this point.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Okay, well that has answered all my questions and I will refer back to the Chair. Thank you.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Rowland, I think you are next.

Deputy R.E. Huelin of St. Peter:

Yes, thanks. This is a section on the national examinations. What support is being offered to students who perhaps did not do as well as they would have liked to in their mock exams but are concerned about the grading process and obviously subsequent university placements?

The Minister for Education:

I believe Sean slightly touched on this earlier in terms of the grading process. I think there is going to be, well I know that there is because I have received emails and contacts from people. I believe I have spoken to you about this before, Rowland, this concern about moving on or even into work by younger students. Everybody is in the same boat at this process at this time. But Sean did cover the point, the ability to take that exam in the autumn. But in terms of accessing to university, I know of some who have concerns around the student financing model, as an example, who are thinking and are worried about what is happening in terms of the U.K. for going to university for this September and are considering going to university next September. I am not sure whether Sean wants to or Mark can expand on that to give you a little bit more detail.

Group Director, Education:

Happy to do so or to refer to Mark first.

Director General, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

You go first, Sean.

Group Director, Education:

Thank you. Deputy Huelin, this is one of the most frequently asked questions and it is because the students, whether G.C.S.E. or A level, tend to do far worse in their mocks in the summer. Why is

that? Well, maybe they are not prepared, maybe they are not taking it seriously. But one of the trade secrets is that teachers set mocks a bit harder than the real thing to sharpen minds and to say: "Come on, you did really well" and often teachers in the feedback process to students say: "It will not be any harder than that, let us crack on." Sorry, Deputy Ward is smiling because he, as a renowned head of science of one of our biggest schools until recently, may well have done the same. The examination boards know this, they know that the mock results will very often go up because we get a national profile. There are around 675,000 young people in each chronological year group taking the British-based exams, including students in the Channel Islands, so they will look at the profile of all of the results. In some subjects, not so many anymore since the previous Secretary of State in the U.K. moved us more fully to internal exams, you will know in certain subjects like art, P.E. (physical education), sports, science, design and technology, textiles, there is a great deal of course work and that course work will be captured, albeit from home learning, to get the final grade. Schools are very skilled at doing internal assessments, as well as mock examinations and they will garner all of that material together to advocate on behalf of our Jersey young people doing their examinations. As I mentioned before, as the Minister has referenced, there is an appeal process and the option of an autumn examination to get a back-up or indeed improved grade on that, which is offered this August.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Yes, you have covered nearly all my next question, so thank you, Sean. However, how is this being communicated to students and parents alike?

Group Director, Education:

The communication is through the school. We are working with school leaders, just as we mentioned in the first block of questions about the safe exit, safe return of schools. Ordinarily post the May half term, year 11 and year 13 students would not be back; they would be in study leave doing the internal exams and then having the longer summer holiday after all of that hard work and other things like proms. The Minister mentioned at the beginning about mass gatherings and the concern. We are working with schools on the phasing return but we do not want to lose sight of the fact that year 11 and year 13 are very important going on to transition. Some will be going into a new sixth form, those going off to university may well need some of that well-being care transition work, so we are going to work with schools about late summer how we gather those groups together and give them advice. But the core piece, advice is through each school.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

You mentioned vocational courses but what guidance is being received from the exam boards to support teachers and lecturers in the assessments of these courses?

Group Director, Education:

My colleague, Saboohi, would be best placed, I think, to answer the piece on lecturers and the vocational courses.

Director, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

Hello. We are completely in contact with what the advice is from them is awarding bodies and we are following the rulings that is related to the courses that you are running at Highlands College. It seems that ...

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Sorry, I do not know if your microphone is but you are giving us all a bit of a Darth Vader sort of voice coming through. Can I ask you to repeat that because I did not quite ...

Director, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

Yes, it might be due to my Wi-Fi. If I take the video off, that might help.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Okay, let us have a go.

Director, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

Okay, can you hear me better now?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I think that is better, yes, thank you.

Director, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

Okay. Highlands College, as you are aware, is running a variety of awarding bodies' courses. We have been in contact with the Education Department in the U.K., as well as the awarding bodies that directly provide courses at Highlands College and we are following the advice that they are given. We are also receiving updates from the Association of Colleges in the U.K., that would enable us make the assessments that we need to be in line with the awarding bodies' guidelines. For our apprenticeship programme, what we are looking to achieve is to make sure that those who have been unable to attend work due to COVID-19 restrictions are brought back to the college with the agreement that they would do their end-point assessment and, therefore, are able to achieve their qualifications. We are also working with various businesses to involve them and include them as part of the assessment because some of the practical work that they were supposed to complete might not have been completed and we are working with employers in that regard. That is in hand as part of the return to the college programme, we are looking at making sure it is similar to what

other colleagues explained in terms of guidelines of what we are working on, the safety of our learners and our staff, as well as ensuring that those who are unable to access learning, the way that is available to other students, are available to access learning. Overall, we are following the links and connections that we have with the U.K. and we are not considering any area to be at risk.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

This is more of a general question. What concern do you have or what measures are you putting in place because clearly some students could slip an academic year or delay going to university or delay starting work, whatever it is? Are you concerned about that or what measures are being put in place to support them, if that is likely to be the case?

Director, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

What we have got in place is over the summer and also in terms of admission for the next academy year, we are looking for those who are entering the further education or moving within further education from one year to another, making sure that we have the set-up of admission and training for them that would be over and above the normal inductions that they would receive in order for us to make sure that they are ready to go back to full training and full learning. That piece of work, similar to what Sean explained, is available to children that are transiting from one stage to another. In terms of those students who would be considering going to university, we are putting together a more comprehensive study skills programme to bring them back for the period that they have not been studying, for them to be able to access and get on to the universities that they are interested in doing. There are not any specific concerns at this moment in time. We have updated the Skills Jersey sites online access to career advice and guidance. There will be further information of that publicised over the next few days. We hope that people are available and able to access the facilities that are available, both online, as well as the specific programmes that we have put together to enable those people who are attending further and higher education to access the training and support that they need.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I am sorry to push on this but I did not hear it. There could be a delay in certain students from either moving on with their academic careers at university or their work careers outside of university because they might not have got the necessary qualifications through the mock exams; they have been assessed by the mock exams but that is my concern for those particular students. How are we supporting them or is this an irrelevance? Are we talking very small numbers here?

Director, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

I believe that there will be small numbers but we have in our planning put together a repeat of some of the exams that students might feel that they have not achieved the grades that they were

expecting. We are looking at the guidance that comes from various awarding bodies to that regard, to make sure that that is acceptable if we were to repeat any of the exams. Overall, in terms of the reports that we have received from Highlands, those who are accessing online learning seem to be flourishing and there has not been any areas that we have any concerns about. As I have said, the main area of concern is having the time for those who need to do some practical exams to be able to conclude that in order to gain their qualifications.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

We had better move on. Thank you.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, thank you. I am aware of time and I know the Minister has to go to another meeting. Can I ask for a quick summary of what is happening with the project team in relation to school fees during the ongoing crisis?

The Minister for Education:

If I can possibly pass this on to Jonathan, he will be able to give a very quick synopsis oversight because he is currently managing this project for me at the moment, very kindly. It has been a long haul.

[11:15]

It has been a tricky particular one. I think the principles that we laid out for this one was the fee-paying schools, particularly in regards to fee-paying schools. There is still a provision of education, albeit we provide it in a different way. But if Jonathan can just expand on the way that we took this forward and what is happening at this moment in time.

Director, Business Change:

Thank you, Minister. The first thing to reflect is that, as described before, this is broad and complex. There are a number of sectors we have to consider. Each sector needs a different treatment and within each sector there are various different subsectors that need different treatment as well. I will just talk through the main sectors and what we are doing so far. In the context of schools, as the Minister has described, she has clearly laid out the stance that says that for those parents who could continue to pay fees, they should continue to do so, please; that is, as we have described, predicated largely on the continued provision of education, albeit online. We have heard several examples of where teachers are also providing a support for those students who have formal qualifications in the context of some of their work around assessments. There is a concern of course of parents whose income has been directly impacted by COVID and, consequently, the Minister has asked us to work

up. We are at advanced stages of what we are describing a hardship approach, which looks to provide some financial support for schools, specifically to provide support to those parents affected by COVID in the context of their income, to help them get through the next term's fees. In terms of the state of progress there, that is an advanced business case with the Treasury at the moment and we are just working through the final governance aspects to determine and evidence that we continue to spend public finance wisely. I will pause there before I move on to the nursery sector, in case there are any questions.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I mean there are many, many questions obviously but we will have to wait. Do you have a timescale for when that will be available?

Director, Business Change:

I am hoping to get that submitted and agreed. It will probably be submitted by close today, so the agreement deadline would then be next week. We then move to implementation but a number of schools have already been very helpful by providing, for example, their pre-existing mechanism for determining eligibility for hardship and that gives us some comfort that we can implement the scheme relatively quickly thereafter. We know head teachers were asking for it, so the pressure is on us as ever but it is progressing well. Moving on then to the nursery sector. The first thing I will say is we are very grateful to the representative body, J.E.Y.A. (Jersey Early Years Association), who have been working with us with close contacts. We have weekly meetings and in the last meeting they were good enough to canvass their members for opinions on how the co-funded payroll scheme is supporting nurseries. We were pleased to hear that in the majority of cases that is working well in the context of this first month's payment and that is April salaries. It is likely to get more difficult in May and the body were able to tell us that June might well cause some more issues, in that there are potentially insufficient reserves to make that payment to staff before receipts of funds from the Government. That is the main issue to deal with immediately and our approach is to work with the Treasury team, the authors of that business scheme and indeed some of the banks who are stepping in with Government underwritten lending facilities to see if we can get a cash flow support back into the nurseries come June time. Plenty of time to sort it, we are very aware of the issues. The other issue, interestingly, that we have our eyes on for that sector is the risk that is presented by the end of the co-funded payroll scheme, if that ends after 3 months; that is a scenario, combined with a continuation of reduced student numbers and, therefore, reduction in fees and an increase in staff costs. That, if you like, creates, and I will quote one of the members of J.E.Y.A., the perfect storm, that means that they could be facing a greater risk at that stage come June, July time and now. Again, by virtue of that close collaboration, we are eyes open to that risk and we are now going to work through with a number of different Government and external parties how to mitigate it. It is very connected to the safe and the phased return to a childcare we have been talking

to, so that is something we will work on closely. If I then move on to some of the student financing and we have heard a few aspects of that. The first thing to say, interestingly, as with many, many government services, we have to be able to deal with the full range of opinion and emotional decision-making, in the context of students, for example, and what might happen in a 2021 academic year for new students. We had a number who were saying to us: "We think that the employment market is looking a bit tricky, therefore we are more likely to start university studies." But, equally, at the polar extreme we have those who are saying: "We are a bit uncertain as to how the institutions will provide learning, so we would like to defer for a year" and, of course, every point between those 2 extremes. The point of saying that is that, as ever, we have to try and deal with different scenarios of how we plan things. The main aspects in the context of COVID impacts on these groups is around, as we have said before, some of the logistical planning about getting access to flats and apartments and, therefore, getting a hold of belongings; that is very much dealt with, in large part, by opening up the air bridge for students, which we are in the process of resolving now. Also, recognising that some students might have some incremental costs as a consequence of, in particular, final year students on a grant, having to go back beyond the term of their normal final year to undertake exams or placements or final aspects of their degree. We have to build, therefore, the financial means by which we respond to those. In terms of the stage of work, we are now at a stage when all officers have concluded what recommendations we would like to make to the Minister. It is likely that we will be making those recommendations in writing at some point close today, which gives the Minister another exciting weekend of hard work to continue to review and appraise those options. But it means that we should be in a position to make some decisions by middle of next week for the full ranges that relate to that student finance funding. A final point before I then pause for breath and responses and supplementary questions, is that we are also aware through work with Jersey Childcare Trust of some of the good work they have been doing as it relates to provision of services into the early years sector. I am pleased to say supportive through the co-funded payroll scheme, which removes some of the immediate concerns they had. Also, they have been very supportive of the work with nannies, getting back into working with households and while that is not yet resolved, because of course it relates very much to the health advice around entering the household for non-essential work, we separated that group from the broader safe exit plans to try and speed up and expedite the solution for that group. Again, good progress made so far, not yet resolved but, again, looking to try and work with the health advisers to get clear guidance back to that group by end of next week.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

That is a very comprehensive answer. We have only got a few minutes left, so I am going to move on. I wanted to ask about teacher well-being as well in this scenario because we have a very different scenario for teachers to do their job on. How is the well-being of staff being monitored during this situation because, as I think we know, having your office in your own home means you

do seem to constantly be on the computer and dealing with stuff as well? How is the well-being of teachers being monitored during this time?

The Minister for Education:

Yes, Chair. I completely get and understand what you are talking about when it comes to the working from home piece. It can be very difficult to separate that work, home, life balance when there is a great deal going on at the moment and you want to do the best for, particularly in a teacher's world is do the best for the children they are responsible of educating. We can recognise those difficulties that some may be thriving through this, some may not be so. They receive weekly updates on staff well-being and how to access support. There is a number of helplines, a well-being support pack, advice and tips. Working from home, they are getting advice and tips about managing distractions, managing the work station in safety when they are working from home. The H.R. business partner has not been contacted, as far as we are aware, by any teaching staff with any concerns regarding well-being at this present time. I do not know whether Sean can expand on that for you or whether you would like him to expand on that.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

There are 2 things before Sean replies, I think we have had this assurance but this again the teacher performance improvement plans, which put a lot of pressure on teachers, have been suspended during this process because you simply cannot perform as you normally would. Secondly, it is just the question of making teachers make that division, as was mentioned by the Minister, I know what they are like and they do tend to over-commit at times and then put themselves in a vulnerable position. I do not know if you have a comment on that, Sean.

Group Director, Education:

I would agree with you, Chair, about the commitment and we have seen it, have we not? The incredible work ethic in maintaining home learning, in going into schools, indeed turning up in the Easter holidays in a voluntary capacity and many schools' head teachers reporting huge numbers volunteering to do the May half term for critical workers' children. As the Minister said, the well-being of staff, this is for your technical point, that in a much earlier Scrutiny hearing I said I believe to be the case and we later confirmed to you that those personal improvement plans were all paused throughout this period and put to one side. Teachers are responsible and indeed through our acts of referral, we have got a 24/7 confidential line that people are concerned about their own well-being but this is a dynamic 2-way street. Not everyone puts their hand up to say: "I am struggling." They need an arm around their shoulder figuratively, with social distancing obviously, from their head teachers or their direct line managers. Privately and confidentially, there is a great deal of activity through the H.R. business partners of supporting individuals who are struggling with this because the duty of care for our staff is discharged through the heads and down through then their leadership

teams. I know of many examples, obviously not for public airing, where a great deal was being done in that area. But the commitment of professionals to push, push, push to do their best by children is evident to all of us, I know.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, okay, and we are very aware of that. We have got a few minutes left. I think the questions from Deputy Higgins on support for vulnerable children and their families has been covered. Deputy Higgins, are you happy with that or do you want to add anything?

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

No, I am happy with that at the moment, thank you.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay, so we will move on to some questions at the end in terms of future aspects. I wanted to ask about the independent school funding review that was happening and the outcomes of that so far and how they might be affected by the COVID-19 situation. Because obviously you have had a lot of information come through from that review. Do you have any thoughts on that at the moment?

The Minister for Education:

I have lots of thoughts on that at the moment. We have not received the final report. We have seen draft reports with regards to the school funding review. Of course, when COVID came along a lot of the work that we were doing has been put on the back burner. We have only in the last week, 2 weeks started discussing how we get some of these things back on track; if we do, how we do that. There is, of course, the bigger leads coming from the Council of Ministers about how the Government Plan is going to be working this year, if at all, what recovery may look like, whether there is a recession after this, how we work through that, what our budgets and forecasting are looking like. That has started conversations around finances and structural and cyclical deficits and all the issues around those. They have started in the Council of Ministers and, of course, as an education team we have been discussing about how we bring some of these particular programmes back online if we can.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Are we saying that the recovery phase, the discussions and that have started and you have been included, as with all Ministers, or do you feel that there needs to be wider consultation with you on that?

The Minister for Education:

I think you asked a question in the States about groups and think-tanks and bits and pieces like that, Chair. But there has been a separate group set up of Ministers, which includes the Chief Minister, the Minister for Treasury and Resources, the Minister for External Relations and the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture and myself around the recovery piece. I have been asked specifically to go into that meeting and in actual fact that is my next meeting today. We are regularly meeting about how ... because we do not know what things are going to look like after COVID-19, that there are so many variables and unknowns about how we return to some form of normal and if there is a recession, how much that will affect States finances. But of course with all the finances that are being used during COVID as well and the implications of social distancing and stay at home and all those various requirements that we have around the health aspects, some of the issues that I have and I have raised many times is around our efficiencies programme, which I had issues with previously but it has exacerbated it even more.

[11:30]

Some of those efficiencies we are talking about, increasing charges, now if you are talking about a recovery you do not start charging businesses to upskill workforce because that does not help that recovery, it does not help them. These are the kinds of conversations we are having.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Just to finish off, things will be different after this and is this not a prime opportunity for any reform of education system to move it forward as best as possible to take that opportunity and that is a time for reform because things are going to have to change anyway in many ways?

The Minister for Education:

Yes, I think there is always an opportunity to learn from these types of experiences and take on board a lot of the opportunities. There are always positives to every negative. There are things that we could potentially do but, as you know, Chair, I know and having worked in the States for a long period of time, it is the types of changes that we would need to see. We have had the consultation in terms of the big education conversation and there may be a piece around us maybe going back out to the public after this or during this and saying: "Right, we heard you the first time in the big education conversation, your experience with what you have seen in terms of education during this period, how would you like to see education going forward from that piece?" We are asking those questions, we are having those conversations at the moment about how we could do that. The thing is with doing this type of work as well is that you have to have the capacity of your officers to do so and, literally, everybody has been 100 per cent focused on how we plan, deal and manage and finance COVID-related issues at this precise time.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I am conscious that we have come to the end of our time and people have other meetings. If there are any questions regarding that we will put them in writing to you that we have not covered. Is there anything else the panel want to raise at all? If there is anything just quickly speak up, I would suggest.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

No, thank you.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I recognise we have missed out one question in particular but we will put that in writing, I think, if that is okay.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I am fine for the time being.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is there anything from the Minister or officers they want to ask quickly before we end the meeting?

Director General, Children and Young People, Education and Skills:

Chair, just to say that I have posted a supplementary answer for Deputy Higgins around the landline issue and no landline is required. You just need a mobile device that a mobile router can connect to.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay, yes, I saw that, that is very helpful. I would assume that is part of the provision, thanks. Okay, in that case then I will say thank you to everyone for their time and thank you to all those working in education and in schools for the commitment they have made to continue in education in a very difficult circumstance. I will call the meeting to an end. Thank you very much.

[11:33]