

3.2. Senator J.L. Perchard of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the provision of Physical Education in primary and secondary schools

Very appropriate that we should be racing through the questions. How many hours a week are head teachers required to provide physical education and genuinely competitive sporting opportunities to primary and secondary schools and will the Minister agree to adjust the school curriculum to provide more compulsory P.E. (physical education) and more opportunities for pupils to engage in genuinely competitive sports and, if not, why not?

Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

The Jersey curriculum ... pupils will receive a minimum of one and a half hours of compulsory physical education each week. In a recent survey carried out by a physical education working party and led by a professional adviser, it was determined that a large number of our schools deliver 2 hours each week during the school hours. In primary schools, competitive sports are provided between schools in football, netball, cricket, tag rugby, cross country and athletics. In secondary schools, the same opportunities exist but with the addition of hockey, badminton, table tennis, tennis, squash and rugby. Sporting opportunities are also available outside of the school curriculum time. The work and contribution of the Sports Development Officers, governing bodies, volunteers, and the community sports team allow for a large number of sporting activities at lunchtime, after school, weekends and during holiday time. Therefore, the Jersey curriculum offers a balanced learning programme for all of our young people. It is broad and balanced in its design to give every young person the best deal possible. Therefore, it is not planned to adjust the time allocation with the Jersey curriculum for any one subject area.

3.2.1 Senator J.L. Perchard:

Does the Minister consider one and a half hours of compulsory physical education provided to school children each week to be sufficient?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

With regard to providing a full learning experience for all children, I do.

3.2.2 Senator J.L. Perchard:

Is the Minister aware that some of the Island schools who actively provide and promote competitive sports, some of them provide and promote competitive sports and others who believe that competition on sports fields is to be discouraged, presumably because they consider it may be divisive. Will the Minister, then, clear up this confusion by undertaking to contact all head teachers to advise them of the minimum levels of P.E. and competitive sporting opportunities that they are expected to provide their students?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think I said in my first answer that the schools are required to provide at least one and a half hours of physical education each week. This is well known by the head teachers and it is, as I say, provided by them. With regards to competition, it is my knowledge that all primary and secondary schools engage in inter-school sporting activities and as such there is an encouragement for us to develop the competitiveness within our individuals.

3.2.3 Senator J.L. Perchard:

If I may? The Minister is satisfied there is a standard across all schools and that standard is being maintained and that there are not some schools that are out-performing others in this respect?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

That is correct.

3.2.4 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

I am presuming the Minister has contacted schools because, unfortunately, an hour P.E. lesson turns into 35 minutes of physical activity and a half hour P.E. lesson or football is around 15 to 20 minutes, especially in senior schools. So will the Minister please check or look again. There is not one and a half hours being done in all of our senior schools and that is because of the changing times and the showering. So 35 and 15 minutes is under one hour a week. Does the Minister think this is enough physical education?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

As I said before, we need to balance the curriculum and the learning experience that our young people are required to be provided with and, as such, I fully agree that it would be nice to have additional lessons in physical education. However, we also have to provide and develop the academic skills of our young people and, therefore, there is this balance to be struck. I would hasten to add that there are outside of the school hours many opportunities, and I underline the point, many opportunities for young people to engage in physical activity of many sorts and I would encourage all children and parents of those children to engage in that.

3.2.5 The Deputy of St. Mary:

I would like the Minister to confirm that while competitive sports have their place. He also agrees that schools should encourage co-operation as a key value in human behaviour.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Team activities are extremely good and useful to participate in and that is part of the reason why we based a selection of sports to encourage those team building and team type activities, which will help a young person develop and fulfil its role in society.