



Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny

Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Thursday, 2nd May 2024

Panel:

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (Chair)

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée of St. Helier South

Witnesses:

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central, The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Deputy C. Alves of St. Helier Central, Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

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

Mr. R. Sainsbury, Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Mr. J. Williams, Programme Director, Education Reform

Mr. K. Posner, Associate Director, Innovation, Transformation and Business Support

[12:30]

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (Chair):

Welcome to this quarterly hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 2nd May. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. I would ask that any members of the public who have joined us in the room today do not interfere in

the proceedings and, as soon as the hearing is closed, please leave quietly. If we begin with introductions now. I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, the chair of the panel.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée of St. Helier South:

I am Deputy Porée, and I am a panel member.

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville:

My name is Connétable Mark Labey of the Parish of Grouville and, just to warn everyone, as I have warned the chair already, if I start to cough - I am suffering from bronchitis at the moment - I will have to leave the room. Just so you are aware.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Deputy Rob Ward, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Deputy Carina Alves, Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Rob Sainsbury, chief officer, Department of Children, Young People, Education and Skills.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

Jonathan Williams, programme director, education reform.

Group Director, Education:

Sean O'Regan, group director, Education.

Associate Director, Innovation, Transformation and Business Support:

I am Keith Posner, associate director for innovation, transformation and business support.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you, everyone. We just have 1½ hours for this, so if we can try and keep the questions and answers concise. The first questions are quite broad ones about the Ministerial portfolio, C.S.P. (Corporate Strategic Policy) and so on. Minister, you are the first postholder of Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. What is your assessment of the new Ministerial position and the split of responsibility with the Minister for Children and Families, and what impact do you think this change will have?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

First of all, I fully support the split between the 2. I think the children's remit is a huge remit, so is the education remit. It gives more focus to both of us as Ministers. We have a clear delegation where I take on education, library service skills and the Minister for Children and Families, as is, takes on children's social care, integrated services and young people's services. We do talk to each other and, in fact, in our regular Ministerial meetings each week, we have a 30-minute overlap, so that we have a combined meeting. I think it is a really good way to do that. I think it was interesting, when I looked back at some of the previous hearings obviously doing my preparation, that so much time was spent talking about C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) in one of the hearings. It did not give a lot of time to focus on education, and I think this will help us focus on that education, remit and skills, et cetera. So I am very supportive of it.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So all positive then.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

In the new draft Common Strategic Policy, 3 of the 12 priorities for Government to deliver in the next 2 years have the Island outcome of children as their primary focus. How will you manage the cross-Ministerial work that will be needed to achieve the desired outcomes?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

First of all, I would say I am very pleased that the first priority in the C.S.P. is about nurseries and is within my remit. I am very pleased that that has happened. The other 2 are about school meals; actually one of them is on school meals. Those are the 2 really that come under my remit, to extend those school meals to all primary schools, which is a good thing to do and to extend the nurseries.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We have questions on those specific topics, so is there anymore you can say about how you will do the cross-Ministerial work on the children's outcomes, in particular?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely. Again, well, we have those communications weekly, so we would certainly feed back on how we are going during those weekly meetings, which is a really important point to have. I think also for the - I do not speak for the Minister for Children and Families - but I am sure that he will have an input on a number of other areas as well, such as anything on housing. That is one of

the benefits of having that children's remit, because it affects children across our society. So in a similar way that will be the case.

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Can I just add to that as well? I think it is useful that one of my additional roles is obviously Assistant Chief Minister, and I am in charge of things like the H.A.W.A.G. (Housing and Work Advisory Group), the population policy and those kind of things. I can offer quite a joined-up approach, and I can have quite a lot of input into Ministerial meetings across Government. I am also the Assistant Minister for Housing as well, which is useful. I often provide a perspective from the Education and Lifelong Learning remit in a lot of the other meetings, and vice versa.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I think, just to add to that, that is the key. I suppose that is the message we are trying to get across, is that it is not about being precious, about any one remit. It is about being clear about what you are covering but when they do enter interlock - it is perhaps not the best word - there is communication going on. But I think the key thing is, as long as we have got the interest of children at heart with everything that we are doing - and I am sure the Minister for Children and Families has - we can be held to account. To some extent that is what we want. It may not be easy sometimes. I may be asked a question from the Minister for Children and Families: "Have you thought of this impact?" That is for me to address, but I think that is a strength of having that Ministry there, rather than just expecting me, if you like, to self-regulate in some way. I hope I do, and I hope we are really careful about the way that we address children, but I think that is a benefit there.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So some more things being considered, more topics considered, but you still have your responsibilities on particular things?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Absolutely.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Minister, do you, and this is with reference to cross-Ministerial work as well, think that Jersey should be exploring similar legislation to that of the U.K.'s (United Kingdom) Online Safety Act?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I looked at that. I did some work; it is very recent actually. I have to say my initial reaction to that Online Safety Act is it puts a lot of emphasis on the regulator in the U.K. I am not entirely sure what the Government is holding itself responsible for. I am not saying necessarily that the Government

in the U.K. just felt it had to do something and therefore came up with an idea, particularly as there is an election pending in the U.K., but I think what we have to do is think about the actual impact of that. There are online safety issues. It is a very, very difficult area. Regulation is extremely difficult because where are the sources of the information? Where are those online sources? The nature of it is, it is worldwide. I think we have to be very, very careful with it. I think, as we do, sometimes we have to see how that pans out in the U.K., take the best bits of that online safety legislation where they may be useful and use them effectively. But that is certainly an area we are very aware of.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

My next question was going to be about how do you plan to approach this work. You are saying at the moment it is about watching?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I think schools, in particular, and colleges are very cognisant of the issues of online safety. How you go about that has always been a problem. Do you blanket block areas? Do you educate young people on Access? I think that is the best way forward. Also really importantly parents, because for me it is a new generation of information. My children are much better at - they might be grown up - online I.T. (information technology) stuff than myself. If I want to know something about using my phone, I will ask my daughter. So there is a new world out there. But I think the safety issue needs to come from so many different angles. Schools are hugely responsible for that, but they have a very difficult job on their hands. So, as Government, we need to be really careful, and within the department we need to be very sensible about the way we approach it, with safety at the core of it, but it has to be manageable as well. It is certainly not going to be a free-for-all.

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I think this is also where the cross-governmental approach comes in, because we know that this probably lies within the expertise of the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development and his team, because that is a specific area that they are looking at. I know they are looking at our online and digital infrastructure as a whole. I think this is probably something that we would have to liaise with that Minister and his team as well.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Also just to say, what the Act does, and this is what I meant at the beginning, part 3 of the Act says: "Duties imposed on providers by this Act." The services they provide are: "Safe by design; designed and operated in such a way that a higher standard of protection is provided for children than for adults." They are very, very good words from that policy. The enactment of that, I think, is going to be the key. How is that actually happening with the regulators?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The panel has been doing quite a lot of work on this and research into it. When we questioned the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs on this matter in a recent hearing she said that there will be, with any local legislation, recommendations from the Violence Against Women and Girls Taskforce report brought into that legislation as well. Do you know how the Government will be considering specific impacts on children and young people as part of that work, or is that still not developed?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

That is not fully developed in terms of violence against women and girls. However, I will say that it is not just the P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) curriculum, but certainly an issue around content within the P.S.H.E. curriculum, but it cannot just be the part placed on to the P.S.H.E. curriculum again. As somebody who has taught P.S.H.E., I know it is not a cure-all. However, it is a good vehicle for starting that in schools. I think also when we teach I.T. in all its forms, safety online is one of the areas that needs to be addressed, and I am pretty sure that it is. But we have to look at what ... there is a responsibility for those who provide these services as well. What impact we, in Jersey, can have in those providers is a good question because they are either U.K. or international providers. What do we do with certain provision? I would also say, I think we need to be much more engaging with parents to inform them. It is very difficult for parents in a modern I.T. age to say no sometimes, and we need to support parents as to the reasons and how they can control that online content.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

This is separate to any legislative changes because we were considering whether and why not Jersey did not adopt the U.K. legislation as a permissive extent clause, and probably going to do their own legislation; separate to any legislative changes. You have mentioned things like the P.S.H.E. curriculum. This is like advice to children and parents. Is there any more information you could suggest or anything is about to be updated or refreshed? Because when we looked at some of it on the gov.je site, it was from 2018.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

There is an update, it was recently signed off completely, the new P.S.H.E. curriculum. There will be an online safety content in that, which I think is important, but as much as anything, it is not about teaching legislation, it is about teaching young people how to be safe online. I know there is a greater emphasis on that. Schools do do that, particularly in areas around older children in schools. It is a balance.

Group Director, Education:

In addition to what the Ministers have said, we annually update the document *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, often referred to by its initials as a “K.C.S.I.E.” In liaison with the Safeguarding Partnership Board, we are focusing on updating advice to schools on the use of mobile telephones in school. But clearly that is the other end. What young people see on phones and other devices is one thing. I think the legislation in the U.K. is to compel the owners of the main social media sites to respond positively, to remove that which is dangerous. So it is both ends. It is how we support young people because even if, as some advocate, you have a full lockdown of phones in schools, the hours young people are not in schools at times have unfettered device. So, as the Minister said, educating children at different ages and stage for safe usage is a key part of our responsibility.

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I think ultimately the U.K. Act will have an impact on us inadvertently because it does look at controlling things like Facebook, for example. So we need ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Take an umbrella, if they do.

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Yes. I think we just need to monitor and see whether, if there is a positive effect, that then has an onward impact to us in Jersey.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So that is basically about monitoring and providing advice to children and parents. Just before we move to the next thing, I just wanted to say that the gov.je information on this Keeping your Child Safe Online and Letter to Parents is from 2018. So I think it may need updating.

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

That needs updating.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I am glad you mentioned that because I think we do need ... it is time for an update on that, and that is certainly possible now.

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

It is ever evolving especially with things, and I think just raising awareness at a societal level around things like deepfakes, for example, because that is becoming something that has been making the rounds and there have been some documentaries around that. That can really ruin people’s lives, and just raising awareness of that.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Without being critical of the gov.je website, obviously, I think it should be much more a live site, if you like, in terms of having ongoing updates, but also current issues being raised. As a parent, when something comes ... there was something on the news the other day about deepfakes. As a parent, I look at that and I think: "What would I have said to my children when they were younger about that there that could be a good source of advice?" It could even just be phrases, ways into the conversation, for example, so that you can have that discussion with your children.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Is it okay if I just come in? Thank you for your contributions, both of you Ministers, and we can hear that obviously presently you are going to be monitoring, spending time and effort in educating children as well as parents.

[12:45]

From a parent's point of view, from a community point of view, what they really want is the Government to take responsibility as well as the companies who provide those sites. But what you are telling us at the moment is that it is going to be something that is going to be coming from the parents and the children when that is being proven not to be working, because parents themselves cannot monitor children. The Minister said himself that your child knows more how to use a computer than yourself.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Absolutely.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

It is the providers of those sites and those facilities, how are they going to take that responsibility rather than passing the responsibility to the parents?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just add other jurisdictions, like the Isle of Man, has just adopted the U.K. Act, which leaves Jersey children not covered.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

The Isle of Man has a greater connection with the U.K. Parliament as well in terms of what it does, so it is easier for the Isle of Man to do that. We set our own laws. That would be something for the Home Affairs, or whatever Minister, to take on board. However, I will say that within schools it is not

just about leaving it to children and parents. Schools spend an enormous amount of time keeping children safe online in the best way they can. I think they try all sorts of ways; certain levels of lockdown, if you like, of access to sites. I cannot remember what system is used now that has to go through a few schools, the name of it.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We will have to move on though, I think, because we have not got a lot of time.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

But it is certainly something we will look into in more detail.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you. If we just ask about the budget now. What is your assessment of the budget available for the Education and Lifelong Learning portfolio in 2024? Do you envisage any significant changes being made to your budget as part of the next proposed Government Plan?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

There are a number of things. The split between revenue is not in the old Government Plan, obviously, but we do know that detail is where it would go. In terms of the budget, the net budget as of 31st March 2024 was £214 million for education. In terms of where we go in the next Government Plan, there will be bids for the parts of the C.S.P., obviously in terms of school meals, for the nursery project and also the lifelong learning project. It is a really important part of the remit. I hope it is more than just adding to the title, because one of the key things that we have to do is look at the way that access to education and training happens throughout people's lives in Jersey. We are an Island. If we want to maintain our population and we want to have a skilled population, education throughout time is important to that. Indeed, I would say to people, if they are listening, if you want to go up to the Skills show today up at R.J.S. (Royal Jersey Showground) - give a little plug - that is open until 6 o'clock. Fantastic event; I was there this morning.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you. Do you know, how will the C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) budget be divided between the 2 Ministers?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

There is a division for young people, which I think is around £4 million; social care is £26 million; integrated services is £10 million; education is £139 million. There are some other figures at the end, I just rounded them up. So the division is there from ... it was not difficult to divide up the budget into the areas that we are discussing. It is a lot easier having the skills remit within Education

as well, and that also helps drive the lifelong learning part of the C.S.P., so that we are bringing things together. You may have questions on that later, I do not know. But that is a real key point. What I do not want to do ... I think bringing these things together, the key areas that feed into each other, makes it, if you like, easier and, dare I say, more efficient in terms of the way that we can take on projects, develop things, and be proactive in what we do rather than reactive to need. There is always going to be an element of reaction to need on the Island.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I ask, if it is possible, if the panel could have that in writing, that breakdown?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Absolutely. To be honest, I thought you already had it, but you should have had it. Sorry, apologies.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Now I have just got a few questions about nursery funding.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Absolutely.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The Common Strategic Policy proposes to extend nursery and childcare provision to children aged 2 to 3 years, which was an amendment brought by our panel as well, with an initial focus on those with additional needs. Can you provide some further information about that criteria and, if possible, explain approximately how many children this would support each year?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

It is very difficult to explain how many children it supports each year because we have to have the provision in place. I have to start with a bit of a context and something that is very important. I have said this a number of times, I think, in the Assembly. I think there was an error made in the U.K. in the offering of a provision. It would be incredibly easy for me and very, very popular among parents if I said: "Here is your N.E.F. (Nursery Education Fund) for 15 or 20 hours a week for 2 year-olds. They go to try and find a nursery and there is no nursery place. We are not going to do that. It is difficult because it takes more time, but we need to build that first.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

If I can just say, that is why our panel said for a plan to be brought in towards the end of the year.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

The best way to do that to get, if you like, the best use of the money early on and the best use of the provision is to identify additional needs. It is a very wide area actually. Jonathan, do you want to say a couple of words on that because I am looking across and I know you have done a lot of work on that? Just quickly do you want to ... just a brief overview would be really helpful.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

I have been given a steer by the Minister to deliberately use phraseology like “additional needs” as opposed to boxing ourselves in very specifically to special educational needs or types of, potentially, over the early formal assessment, or perhaps linked to a level of poverty in households. We want to try and keep a broad remit. We also want to work with some of the third sectors who are currently providing this support. Jersey Child Care Trust, for example, have a well-established panel that we are working in conjunction with that seek to identify those children with additional needs in the Island and then provide some support. The Minister’s theory is to be able to bolster that much further and move much faster with that cohort of children but, as he has articulated, at a pace that the market can provide spaces for. I think over the next 6 months or so, we will start to expose a much greater clarity where those needs are, how those needs are best supported in terms of nursery provision, and then how the Government can provide funding and enable that.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I am guilty of pushing this a bit. I know that, and I will not look at the officers around me when I say this. I want this provision in place as soon as possible. But you have to be realistic about what you are providing. It has to work. The worst thing we can do is to drop the quality of child care or change the ratios. That is not what we want to do. It will not help our children in the long term.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I know Jonathan has just mentioned that work over the next 6 months to build on this, but do you have any timeframe for extending to a universal offer for 2 to 3 years?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

It is difficult to answer. I have an ambition; a really strong ambition. I would like to get some pilots in place as soon as possible. If we can have some pilots in place by September, for example. I know that means some urgent work very quickly. That is a really good start. I genuinely believe that if we put pilots in place and show them to be working, that will enable us to move really quite rapidly because we have had good relationships with the Jersey Early Years’ Association, with the third sector providers. We are all singing from the same hymn sheet. We want the best for children. I would like to, if there is any possibility of being able to do it, in the 2026 Government Plan I would like to try and put something in there about that provision being extended, but we have to be realistic about the provision being there. It may well be that it is phased. It may well be in 2026, we can

offer it to a much wider cohort before we offer universally. If we can offer it universally, I will be coming back into this hearing and being really proud and being desperate for you to ask about it because it is the right thing for our children. It is an ambitious target, but if we do not do that, if you do not have an ambitious target, you do not get anywhere.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Some pilots by September then. Talking of pilots, we saw some references to new spaces in the primary school nurseries. Do you think that is going to work, plan around that?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I think realistically the really good place to start is there are 188 spaces, I believe, in our States nurseries, but they are for 3 year-olds. If we can get the extended hours and wraparound time for those places, that will likely involve a combination of private nurseries and other providers getting involved there. Headteachers are certainly open for that because they want to do the right thing. That is the way to free up places for 2 year-olds. We have to look at the way that works for everybody. But I think we have a real co-operative approach from the meetings that have gone on over the previous months and months and months towards that approach, and that is the way to use the resources we have in the best way, and then free up places elsewhere. Having said that, if there are new nurseries coming on stream, we would also support that. We will see what we can do about that from any of our providers.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is great, you have mentioned about meetings going ahead and so on. There is already work going on around planning for wraparound spaces on the primary school nurseries?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Absolutely. Can I say, one of the really important points is, and I have to mention this, the settling of the N.E.F. for the next few years. So much time is spent talking about the measure of the N.E.F., the rate that we pay per hour for the free childcare. We have now settled a 4-year agreement on that. It does a number of things that are really quite crucial to this project. First of all, it says to the sector we understand, we value you and we want to give you stability. That enables the sector to plan, so by the end of December they will know the inflation rate. By the end of January they will know the N.E.F. rate, they can plan. That is really important.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It gives that stability.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

It also says from us, as a Government, as a department, we want you involved and we value what you are doing. That is the way to move forward, I think.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

My next question was to do with how this is going to be funded, in a way. We have heard of options mentioned of either directly supporting nurseries or to support parents with the cost of nursery. Do you have an assessment of these 2 options; you have mentioned the N.E.F.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

In terms of parents, it will be the offer of the N.E.F. fund for 2 year-olds, and we can extend it as quickly as we can. In terms of nurseries, there are a number of things. It is about supporting recruitment because nurseries individually, for example, recruiting, all spend money on that. Let us do it centrally. It is about enabling training and C.P.D. (continuing professional development). We have a number of students in childcare at the moment. I have 87 in my head, but that might be the wrong number. But also it is about extending the provision intelligently. There is a cohort of people on the Island, a demographic, who may be wanting to return to work, that may have brought up their own family, for example. They may want to work 2 or 3 days a week. If we can provide training, we have a source of skills there that we could use within our nurseries to extend that provision, if possible, and that encourages ... that is the lifelong learning element. Where it encourages people back into the workforce in a way that is successful. That is another way that we can do that. Obviously, using up the nursery places and to support nurseries where we can. I will say again, the stability of the N.E.F. fund will help with that because it will help with planning.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

You mentioned about the students; 87 students in childcare. That was my next question, about plans to support recruitment and retention in the nursery education sector. Because this is where it gets difficult, is it not?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

There is currently training available at Highlands, is there not?. Are there are other plans for ...

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I hope 87 is the correct number, I had that in my head.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

I think it might be 67. I will just double check it.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Apologies for that. I knew there is a 7 in there. Highlands College and its work with nurseries and its work to train is really the central place for apprenticeships. If you look at the lifelong learning remit, we will be looking at focusing on Highlands as the main provider, because they are. That is the sensible thing to do. That enables us to really target that provision and that training. But there are other elements to it as well. As an Island we need to value that sector of our economy properly. So many parents talk about wanting good quality nursery care, but then those people who are training and being qualified are not seen for the value that they bring to our society. I am hoping, and I know this is perhaps a little bland, but the point that this is the first part of the C.S.P., I think, is very important. It gives a priority for Government for the nursery, and it says to the people working in that sector: "You are valued for our Island and what you do is really important." I think those soft skills ... that soft, if you like, point is important.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Following the adoption of the Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2024, will Government collect feedback on how the early years sector adapts to this; for example, to increase responsibilities and changes to staff training? I did hear of an example or looking at the guidance where a nursery officer perhaps run off their feet is expected to arrange a meeting when an issue comes up, which may be not very practical in some way.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I think part of the interaction between the different sectors is enabling that work to take place. For example, if wraparound care is provided in one of our school nurseries, within that school nursery we have a very highly trained member of staff, and that interaction with the staff in those other nurseries can help.

[13:00]

First of all, that training, but also help with that ... what was the point you made about the nursery officers and so on?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I think in the guidelines, they expected to arrange a meeting and this may be someone being paid a minimum wage being rushed off their feet with their work. It is not practical.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Absolutely.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

That is why we need, when we invest in our nurseries and we invest in the extended provision, to invest in ensuring that the ... what is the word? The monitoring, is the word I am searching for, of the quality of that is an integral part of that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So the Government will be collecting feedback on that?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Absolutely, yes. Because what we want to do ... and this is the important thing about pilots. I hate to be critical of the U.K. Government, but there was a report recently that said they dropped their pilots in terms of the nursery and, lo and behold, later on they realised that the whole system was not working. That is because you did not pilot it properly.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I can see that, yes. We have a really big general question, which a member of the public wanted us to ask. Have the Ministers and their officers produced a cross-cutting financial evaluation of the overall effects of making nursery education completely free to those on average incomes? Has there been that financial evaluation of the overall effects?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Not from me individually. There is an evaluation of the impact of nurseries in terms of the targeting. That is what we are talking about in terms of where there is greatest need. I would suggest, and I would predict, and I would say that I think there is a huge benefit from doing that in terms of the workforce, in terms of the Island, in terms of children's experience, and in terms of supporting parents in what is an expensive Island to live in. In terms of the numbers, I think that would be a very interesting thing to do. In fact, perhaps it is something we should be doing because it would be certainly power to our elbow when we want to develop those schemes. Is there anything officers want to add? Some people have been very involved in this.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

Just the strategic policy are looking at the economic case for change. That does link into that Ministerial portfolio as well. The complete position and resolution, I guess, around that economic impact has not been concluded at this time, but is very much work in progress at the moment and in focus. Absolutely, that question is really helpful to point us ... it is something that we need to do.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

The member of the public is absolutely right, I think there is an absolute benefit from this.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It seems so, does it not?

Programme Director, Education Reform:

There is.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It would be good to know if there is any evaluation being done. You are saying there is work in progress.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

It is in progress.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So we do not know when that is going to be ready though?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I would also like to say beyond the economic benefit, there is a social benefit to us providing quality nursery and provision to enable people back into the workforce, to enable children to have the socialisation that comes with that, to help parents in their roles, because we live in a very changed society. Those social benefits have benefits so much further into the future, which are perhaps difficult to measure economically, but I am sure they have positive economic benefit.

The Connétable of Grouville:

If I may, Chair, there is one other point I thought about, is the fact that, unfortunately, many young couples are considering leaving the Island and many young couples are considering coming to the Island for their employment. This might be a case in point. If free nursery education is available for these individuals, that is a great positive for Jersey as Jersey Limited.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Absolutely. This is where, when we talk about demographics, we are talking about demographics in the current situation. If we get nursery care right, very importantly we may be keeping young people on the Island. Demographics in schools will increase. That is why, whatever we do with our schools and our estate, we have to plan 20 or 30 years into the future, not 2 or 3 or 4 years into the

future. Plan way beyond when I am here so that we set up a structure that is workable well into the future and for this Island.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I am going to move on to school meals, Minister. Something that this panel very much supports. The draft Common Strategic Policy details that the Government will provide a nutritious school meal for every child in all States primary schools. Please, could you provide your assessment of the current pilot scheme and how you plan to expand it?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I am very pleased with the current pilot scheme. Hot food is currently in 10 schools. Two more are launching in April; Rouge Bouillon and St. Saviour. Work is well underway to develop for all remaining schools to have serveries. You may have been to schools, but I would advise, and if any States Members want to come along to schools, the servery is actually very simple and they work really effectively. The timescale depends on the level of works required. There will be different in different schools, but I want to push that along as soon as possible. Thirty staff have been locally recruited within schools to deliver the programme. Can I just mention an extra benefit which I saw, when we talk about nurseries as well, in one school in particular, I know of some parents are coming in and are employed to do the meals. They have got a connection with the school, with their child. They can work exactly the hours they want to in school time when their children are in school. The whole jigsaw, if you like, fits together to work really, really well. That is something to be very proud of, I think, as an Island and as a programme. I think we went to Bel Royal and had some lunch with the children. I talked about the soft social skills before, but seeing children sitting down and eating together is just wonderful. It brings me back to the days when I was at school, all those years ago. But it is certainly something we could do. I think it is a great project and I really want to keep it going.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, and it builds a school community.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Absolutely. It is those social skills. It was lovely when I had my plate and: "What do I do with this?" and this young lad took me over and said: "Right, you put your stuff there, you clean your plate up, put your plate there, put your knife and fork there." I said: "Thank you" and off he went and I went off as well. But they knew what to do. It is great.

The Connétable of Grouville:

One thing we would like to clarify, the 10 schools currently receiving school meals and which provider is covering which school.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Good question. Apetito are covering most of those schools. Someone is going to have to help me now with the specific schools. Do you want to do that?

Associate Director, Innovation, Transformation and Business Support:

So Apetito is an off-Island provider we are working with and Flourish, which is the catering arm of Caring Cooks, are working in St. Martin, St. Peter, Janvrin, Samarès, Grainville and Plat Douet, Springfield, Bel Royal, d’Auvergne is Apetito. Sorry, I mentioned St. Luke’s, that is Flourish. The 2 that are coming on board, Rouge Bouillon and St. Saviour, are going live. At this moment, they have done a parental tasting test. So the engagement path has started, food starting to be delivered from next week. The staff have been recruited; that is going to be Apetito. But we are still in that pilot phase. I think you referred to in your earlier question, we have learned so much from this. Obviously, as you know, as a panel, it is a very new thing for us to do and our ability to learn from the different providers we are working with is enabling us to really kind of refine the future model when we have all of the schools on board. Just learning in terms of how we deliver, the choice element, the nutritional value, the logistics of all this, how the staff are going to work. So we are still in pilot but, as you can see, we are bringing more and more schools on board. Obviously when you have your autumn panel, and if you ask questions again on it, we will have more schools coming on board from September and the numbers will start to ramp up.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That is my next question, which ones are you planning on bringing this to? What is the plan in the next few months?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Rouge Bouillon and St. Saviour are coming online next.

Associate Director, Innovation, Transformation and Business Support:

That is correct, Minister. First Tower, we are working on the servery there. However, we think that is going to go live at the beginning of September. Next term we want to see hot meals in all of our primary schools by the end of the calendar year. But however, saying that, we do have some challenges in 2 or 3 of our schools in terms of building issues. But we want to look at how we can still get hot food into those schools so children can start benefiting. However, the longer-term servery solution may stretch into 2025, but it is the aim by the end of the year to have hot food in all schools.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We realise, as a panel, that the Apetito provision coming in from the mainland and it is a frozen product. But have you felt or had any issues with transport over the winter months because of the lack of boats, et cetera?

Associate Director, Innovation, Transformation and Business Support:

No, not at all. Are you okay with me answering this?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Please do. I was going to make a couple of points, but you carry on.

Associate Director, Innovation, Transformation and Business Support:

Thank you. No, not at all. We have obviously planned for that, and it is a possibility, but we have resilience in the system. In terms of the way that we order in advance, we also have storage on Island as well. And also having a blend of suppliers is helpful to us. But again starting ... sorry, I will be quiet.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

You go on, it is important.

Associate Director, Innovation, Transformation and Business Support:

That is where there is benefit from the pilot too. Because starting with a smaller group of schools and seeing those challenges like the one that you point out could happen means that we can then, as we scale up, make sure that the resilience on-Island is sufficient, should there be challenges to get the food on Island. But so far, no, there have been no problems.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I had those concerns about off-Island provision as well and I was reassured. I was also reassured by the quality of the food, because that is what we saw at Bel Royal. I was also keen to keep some on-Island provision so that when we look long term, we can start to plan for that because there are long-term projects going on, on the Island, which may make changes and so on. You are right about the risks to supply. But there is a good system in place, and I am pleased to see it is happening. The children seem very happy. What I was going to mention right at the beginning was one of the really nice parts of it was when the parents go and do the food tasting with their children, looking at what they are going to eat. I think that is really inclusive of parents, which is such an important thing to get on board. I also saw a great example in the school where there were some children who wanted perhaps some seconds, which I have no problem with whatsoever, and they were suggesting the other dish that was available, which was perhaps a little bit more interesting. There was a real smart approach to say: "Would you like to try some of this?" Then children are trying

different foods and realising: “Oh, I quite like that.” So there are other benefits that go with this, which are not just simply a hot meal, which I just wanted to point out.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Parents saying the obvious: “You never eat that at home.”

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

We have heard that a number of times.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Sorry to interrupt, but we have still got 19 questions, so we will have to move on a bit faster, I think.

The Connétable of Grouville:

My apologies. Next question; the line of questions are about lifelong learning, as you have already said, Minister. Please can you explain how you plan to address lifelong learning as part of your remit?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Part of it is some of the things that came from the P.12 amendment that I want to look at. Then there were some things we can do more quickly than others. For example, the distance learning provision. I want to review those courses, but it must be done properly. This is why I brought the amendments we did with research and any unintended consequences. I am very wary of the value of the courses that we, in terms of their accreditation of the courses, use online. There is certainly a system going on there. That is one of the points we are looking at. All of the issues need to be financially doable within the money that we have for higher education. In terms of the independent student issue, for example, we have updated thresholds this year by 4 per cent, which was the inflation, which we intend to continue to do. First of all, is that reaction because of time? I will not go over all those things because I think we have had the debate in the Assembly on this. But in terms of the wider issue of lifelong learning, there is a ... first of all, there is a lot of really positive work going on with apprenticeships, with the relationships with employers. It was an absolute pleasure to go to the Highlands and saw their annual report and go through what they were doing and seeing the range of things that they are doing. The way they work with employers, the way that they provide the sources for, for example, exams when employers provide the training. That interwoven approach to what we need on the Island is really important. Over the next few years on this Island, we need to take ... we have to grasp the nettle of what do we need for the Island in terms of training, where do we direct that, and how do we do it and fund it? Part of that is to look at apprenticeships being really firmly based within Highlands College as a provider. Skills Jersey have an important role, but it needs to be really clearly defined so they know where they are working. At

the moment we seem to be ... if you like, there is a sort of internal commissioning going on, which I do not think is the most effective way. We can look at that. Everybody involved is on the same side to do the right thing. That is one of the key things about the lifelong learning. It was really nice today on another level - and I said that at the beginning, it is not just another phrase to put into a Ministerial portfolio - up at the Skills show today. I could walk round and talk to employers on those stalls and say: "You know, the lifelong learning remit means something." Immediately there was conversation about the training they are providing, financial services who are providing degrees linked to U.C.J. (University College Jersey). So there is so much going on in the Island. There is an element of co-ordination, there is an element of being clear of what we have now and what we need for the future. Then that makes it a lot easier to target future need. There are some other things, such as green skills with heat pumps, and there will be a need to be able to, for example, service electric cars. They are slightly different in some areas.

[13:15]

So there will be need for that specific training. Also, if we can build a hospital as soon as possible, there is going to be a whole workforce there. Talking to the Construction Council today, the debt scheme, for example, is absolutely excellent. If you do go up to the school, they have a fantastic graphic of the link of the progression between the levels of the construction training, which I think we need to get a copy of and get it around. I took a photo of it, so I will send it to you. Really clear where all these things fit together. So it is there, but the lifelong learning remit will help to bring that all together, I hope.

The Connétable of Grouville:

How will you ensure accessibility to education and relevant provision for students of all ages?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely. I think this is one of the issues that we need to address in terms of all ages. What was said to me in the Construction Council today, they have students from just after school of 16, 17, 18 up to the age of 60, who are taking on different roles and taking on different training. They are addressing lacking of certain skills from perhaps the older population that need to come through. That is exactly the type of thing that we need to do. By having a really sustainable, and I know that word is used a lot, but I mean financially sustainable delivery, sustainable system of apprenticeships, that opens that up for people much wider than it would be now. It may be that companies want to train one of their members of staff and simply do not have access to that training, so it upskills them. I think there is no reason why we cannot do that. It is certainly an important part of our economic development of this Island.

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Can I just highlight as well that obviously apprentice and higher education funding has no age restrictions? So these funding streams are available to all ages.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Yes, very good point.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Do you think people know that well enough?

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I am not sure that they do. Maybe there is a body of work around communication there, possibly.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Again, I think if we can start to talk about ... it is the narrative, is it not? The narrative of having we are serious about lifelong learning, training people on-Island for the skills that we need. This is why I mentioned earlier, when we talked about nursery, very open to different demographics coming back into nurseries. There may be parents out there who are looking for something, have got those skills of bringing up their own children, with training they can re-enter the workplace.

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I think it is also recognising that we are no longer in a culture of a one-career-for-life-type approach. I think people, it is ever changing. So changing that kind of approach.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

There are 5 of us who have had a change of career around this table.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Can you inform the panel, Minister, of what strategies you will be proposing for the education provision for 16 to 18 year-olds who are not in education, employment, or training?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

That is a really good point. There are students who slip through the net, if you like. That is not a good use of our resources for young people. First of all, I think this is partly to do with having the appropriate apprenticeships. I think we need to address that, dare I say, before the age of 16, and we do have an issue in what we do with children who are not fitting into our school system, starting from primary school. I will shoehorn in here the need for a new primary school in the centre of St. Helier, because that is where ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We are coming to that later.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

But it is a really important point about future needs. La Passerelle being based there for primary has that impact early on. La Passerelle secondary school needs to be developed, so we are not letting anyone slip through the net. You may then have less and address that 16 to 18 not in education training at source before it happens. Then you have more of a chance of having the appropriate provision for those young people into the future.

The Connétable of Grouville:

The Common Strategic Policy references that increasing provision of lifelong learning and skills will support the ambitions of the future economy programme. Could you explain how the Government will address that aim?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

By providing the right type of training at the right time, for the right needs of the Island, that is exactly what we need to do in terms of the future economy. I am not saying we are never going to import people. I am an import myself. That is not the point. It is not about saying we do not want people to come to the Island. We will need to import skills. I still believe we need to import skills at some point. But we also have skills on the Island that perhaps are not being directed where we want them to be directed. That is one of the key issues. It is also about emphasising the importance of these sectors of our economy, such as hospitality. We all want to go out and eat, and we all want to have nice places to go to. The staff who are working in hospitality are really important to that, so we need to be supporting that sector as well. Parents want nursery provision, which was mentioned. We need to upscale the value of that profession. We want medically-trained people, want nurses and so on. We can train on-Island with off-Island provision as well in terms of gaining experience. That is the type of smart thing that we want and we need to be doing into the future.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Can you update the panel in respect of your plans for Skills Jersey, please?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Yes. Skills Jersey has a very particular role at the moment in terms of trackers, in terms of supporting young people back into education and training, in terms of supporting ... well, a number, not just young people, but people back into education and training. What I want to do is maintain that but I want them to be able to really direct what they are doing in terms of their links with industry being

that information source as to what is needed. They are going to play an important role in that to identify need, identify the provision that is lacking, so then it can be provided through our providers. It does that already with Highlands. We have done it with the green skills courses, for example. But the providers are there but I do not think there needs to be a great distance between the 2. They need to be closer and work together. I am absolutely certain that that is what is wanted on that side as well.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Can you advise if there has been a recent reorganisation of Skills Jersey, and if so, what is the reason behind this decision and how will it impact the service for the public?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

There has been a reorganisation. It was partly because of some staff who left the provision, I believe. So there needed to be a reaction of that. But I do not think that is complete yet, and I do not think that is clear yet as to where we are. Therefore there is an opportunity there to get that right at just the right time. In terms of the structure of Skills Jersey, there is a structure there, but it has been changed recently. It will be determined to some extent by what we do in terms of the apprenticeship programme itself, training and what role we want Skills Jersey to take that they had before and perhaps we want to pass somewhere else. That is an ongoing project. The structure of any of these organisations is very complex and moving, and I think what we do need is some simplicity, so some clarity in what we are doing. That is better for people working because they know what they are there for and they know what they are doing. I think that is important for employees.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just add? So the staff at Skills Jersey, will they get some certainty soon about what is happening there?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Yes, and that is the other side of the coin. We need certainty for staff. There is nothing worse. They are really working hard. I mean, I have to declare, I have delivered some things for Skills Jersey before I did this course and went in and spoke about what we do in Parliament and some other areas with groups of their young people, which is a really positive thing to do for their trackers. I have not done it since being Minister. Perhaps I should not be doing that, I do not know.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

They will get some certainty soon, will they?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

They will get some certainty, absolutely.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

I will be asking some questions around higher education and student funding. This question is for you, Minister. You did sign an order on 10th April, regarding grants and allowances to improve the uplift of the maintenance grant and clinical component grant payable to students for the 2024 academic year by 4 per cent, and to create an exception for some students on a 4-year course. Please could you provide some further information about your reasons for that decision?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I will deal with the 4 per cent increase quickly. It was because that was the inflation rate in the U.K., and the vast majority of courses are in the U.K. So that fits into that. I think that is correct.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

But their families are based in Jersey though, who supplement the course.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

In terms of if their child is in Jersey?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The families who are helping their children to get through university and have to help with any extra costs, their inflation rate was not 4 per cent, was it? Was there any consideration to that?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

But the costs that the children are incurring in the U.K. is the U.K. cost of 4 per cent, so I think you do have to make a decision as to what costs you are going to take. That was the decision that I thought was most appropriate, to be honest. I understand that discrepancy in terms of cost of living in Jersey, but it seems the children are in the U.K. in their cost of living, and that is what we have addressed. That was the reason for that. In terms of the second part of the error of the 4-year courses, I may need some assistance in this because it got very complicated. There was an error made in terms of what was delivered; that has been rectified. The situation is, if there is a 4-year course where there is a 3-year equivalent, the 3-year funding will be split over 4 years. That was made in error before and not done. I do not believe it is right to go back and correct that error by asking parents and students for that money back. So we will grandfather that, I think is the phrase or grandparent that perhaps is a more modern phrase. We will grandparent that and not ask students to be paying that back. They have got certainty on where they are. But into the future, there is also a clarity on the fact that those courses will be funded in that way, if they are a 4-year

course. There were also some errors made over tuition fee or tuition fees paid where a placement was paid. We have corrected that as well. We want to make that clearer. But again we will grandparent - I am going to use that phrase - those payments from before.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just ask, will the young people who maybe started their courses a year or 2 ago be informed about these changes?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

Yes, I believe they will.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

They do not need to fight to find out themselves?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

They will not suffer from this change.

Group Director, Education:

There will be no detriment.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

That is the phrase I was looking for. There will be no detriment to those students. Thank you.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

The draft Common Strategic Policy references and I quote: "Implementing sustainable higher education student finance." Please, could you confirm what the Council of Ministers means by sustainable in this particular context?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

There is a higher education fund and we have to work within that. Sustainable is any changes that we make can be afforded within that fund at its simplest level. I think starting at a simple level of sustainability, I would say that is what that is. If I decide to make changes of any kind, I need to think about the implications of those changes on the fund: can we do it? What will that mean? It is as simple as that.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

My next question to you, Minister, is about the States Assembly approved proposition P.12, which was to update the higher education funding. It took place on 27th February. Are you able to advise the panel on how you plan to implement different aspects of this proposition and when?

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

There are a number of different parts of that and what we will do ... the simple answer to when is as soon as we can. When it is the most appropriate to. There has often been a wait for wholesale changes in law until all of the changes are there. I think we can move forward with changes a few at a time because then they are implemented quickly. For example, and I have lost my ... I should know this because we did so much work on it.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

I was just going to ... sorry, to stop you very quickly, Minister.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

That is okay. Gives me a chance.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

The when is an important side of this question and you did say as soon as you can. Give us more or less an indication so we can at some point come back to you.

The Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

The 4 per cent increase will be in September this year for the new academic year, for example. That is definite. The other changes include in terms of distance learning also in September. However, I will say that if we look at those changes in distance learning and I am uncertain about them, I will come to the panel and say I have no hesitation in stopping something if I do not think it is the right thing to do. We have to be absolutely certain. These are long-term impacts. I believe that we will be ready for September, but it has got to be right. I would rather take the hit of saying: "You said you were going to do something and it has not happened", than doing the wrong thing. That simply does not work. The other points, in terms of ... I have completely lost my notes.

Assistant Minister for Education and lifelong Learning:

I have got it. I think it is September 2025 not 2024.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Which one are you saying is September 2025? There we go. Okay, yes. September 2024 of distance learning where we can. In terms of the sliding scale for tuition fees, I am concerned about that because it has impact ... more families with an income in excess of £110,000. Whether that

impact is as great as we think it is, or whether it has the impact that it was believed, is another question. We need to look at that very, very carefully. The asset cap for thresholds for landlords; I am not prepared to look at lifting the cap for landlords on a second property. I do not think that is the right thing to do, so I will be absolutely certain about that. The other areas of the proposition, in terms of ...

[13:30]

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, next page over. Sorry, there is so much detail in here. In terms of classifying a student who continues to be living financially independent for one year or more, one of the things that we need to do - and the time for this will be, I think, 2025 at the earliest - will be to look at intelligent ways to do this. A blanket cap of one year has all sorts of consequences, but there has to be some sort of smart approach to this. For older students, for example, those who have been living and working on-Island for a significant length of time. If we want to promote lifelong learning, then we have to enable young people to do that or older people to do that. So there is a very difficult ... but there is a piece of work going on, one of our officers is working on, and I think we can come back to the panel with some smart ideas around that sooner rather than later. These are difficult areas though - sorry - because it is a jigsaw to get right. You have an impact in one area, you need to do the other, and it has to be within that sustainable budget. I do believe, though, that the offer that we make is generous compared to many, many jurisdictions. I do not want to lose that offer for our young people.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Sorry, just for clarity. The Minister's amendment to P.12 made it clear that the vast majority of the work cannot be done before September 2025, at the earliest. Just to provide that clarity.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

That is good that you feel the same way. We are making ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Thank you, yes. Is that enough? I have got pages of it here.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Yes, that is more than enough.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Sorry. I will shut up now.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Okay. My next question to you is with regards to school uniforms. Following a report from the Jersey Competition Regulation Authority, the previous Minister published an update to the school uniform policy, which was in last December 2023, which will limit the number of compulsory bespoke items that can be a part of the school uniform to 5, right? Please could you confirm if you are supportive of the new policy, or advise if you will be making any subsequent changes to this?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, this has created some problems in different areas. I am not going to change it at the moment. I think that schools are adapting to it. They are looking at the way this will happen. I will say one thing; schools do not have to be compliant until September 2026. I think one of the issues that has arisen is schools have acted very quickly. I see why they would; I may well have done so myself. But perhaps that was one of the issues that has arisen. I know about the effect on certain providers; the provider that is closing down, we have put a lot of assistance into, and I think we are in a very good position with them now in terms of the stock and what is happening, and we have got that provision sorted. One of the positives to come out of it is that schools are signing more meaningful contracts with suppliers, so there is some consistency to supply and where they are coming from and into the distance. For example, it does not help a supplier if a school suddenly changes its uniform. They have got to be considerate about that as well. I will remind you that this policy was not for the fee-paying schools, so it does not apply to them. That is quite a key point, I think. In terms of the other schools, I honestly would like to see how this works. We want to do what is right. If it means some flexibility into the future, I will speak to headteachers and we will see how we go. At the moment, I think we have a way forward with it working and I hope it ...

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

I was just going to add ... yes, it was important that you mentioned that the schools do not need to be compliant until 2026. But having said that, most schools need a year in advance to order their uniforms, so we are talking 2025 having that organised.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Thank you for that.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Can I also just add that over 20 per cent of our schools already had 5 items or less, so there is no change for them, and others had 6 or 7; so there is very little change required.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Thank you for that contribution. My next question on that particular issue with uniforms, you answered some of them with regards to how our schools are dealing with it, because we are aware that one of the suppliers in the Island is now recalled and it is folding. Are you aware if schools have been able to find alternative uniform providers for the next year in Jersey?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I believe they have. One of the things as well, as I have mentioned, is there is more stability in terms of the contracts that have been signed, so they know where the supply is coming from. We have worked closely with the supplier that we mentioned. I do not think it is fair to talk about the name of suppliers in this forum ... but we have worked really closely with them and had some positive meetings to try and help where we can. I think we are really getting there. We are getting very close to a point where we do not have much stock left at all, which is very positive because it was not a good place before, admittedly, but I think we are getting there now.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

That is great, Minister. Thank you so much.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I have some questions now about school fees and the school funding formula.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Minister, how do you plan to address the concerns raised by parents at the colleges regarding the impact of what they considered was the impact of the recent teacher pay settlement on school fees?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have addressed that. We will give funding to support the schools to reduce that pay rise and that maintains the level of funding for those schools, as per the States' decision in 2016. In fact, I believe that they are slightly above the 47 per cent of the A.W.P.U. (Average Weighted Pupil Unit) that they are guaranteed, if you like, by that States decision. In terms of the funding formula for

those schools - for the fee-paying schools - we are quite happy to discuss that formula, but that would have to come to the States Assembly, I believe. I believe that we are looking into that; we are trying to track back where those decisions came from in order to change those formulas. So the discussions need to be had in advance.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The fee rises were also kept lower than inflation last year and this year, so the rises that have been implemented were still lower than inflation.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is good. Okay. So the impact of the recent teacher pay settlement on school fees should not really have been any impact at all.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I have to say that the letter that was sent, I would say that I think we can account for every part of that letter and be clear that actually the funding was there and the funding is there. The 8 per cent was the same as all the other fee rises for the other schools. It was not any higher, which may have been suggested to us. I think it is really important to have that. But moving forward, we want to have a positive discussion about funding formulas for all of these schools and grant-maintained schools so they have certainty as well, because that is an important part of provision of education.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes. Okay, thank you. That work on the funding formula for the fee-paying schools is happening now, is it?

Programme Director, Education Reform:

We have meetings booked in between the department, headteachers, board of governors, I think over the next 2 or 3 weeks to progress those conversations around the future methodologies and our choices for funding those schools.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Great, thank you. Can I ...

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Sorry, just to say that the Minister has asked to approve the fee rises requested by the governing bodies, so they decide what the fee rise they want to, and then they ask the Minister to approve that. It is not just done in isolation.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I would not have approved anything above inflation.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can you advise when the next update to the funding formula will be published?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Do you mean for the non-fee-paying schools?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The funding formula - it could be for any school.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The funding formula for non-fee-paying schools is different and is based upon a number of different areas, including ... because the funding formula was set up to target money where there is most appropriate need.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Just to the question, will there be a next update published on ...

Programme Director, Education Reform:

If I may, Minister, thank you.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

You have been involved in this; I will let you answer.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

The intention was originally to have published last month. As a consequence of change of Government we have reprioritised our activities and I would hope to be able to publish the revised version in May. I would say that unlike the changes between 2022 and 2023, which were quite significant by virtue of adding an inclusion component, there are much smaller changes in between 2023 and 2024, principally just reflecting some increase in rates to reflect further investment and the impact of inflation. The changes are small.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The update to the funding formula for the colleges and so on, any changes will come later, would they?

Programme Director, Education Reform:

Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, we would need to have careful consideration and careful discussion as to the way that would be. I do believe it will have to come to the States Assembly because it was determined by an amendment in the States Assembly as to what those levels would be. If we change the A.W.P.U., then we come to the Assembly to say: "We want to change the A.W.P.U." That is correct, so it is not as simple as just saying with the state schools: "We are going to change the funding formula."

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

There is not a timeline at the moment for that?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, not until discussions have happened and we are clear as to what we want to do. The schools may not want to change that funding formula. It may not suit, it may suit, there may be a different formula. But whatever it is, it has to be the most effective use of our money for all of our schools as we go forward.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

All right. Thank you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

This is about the C.Y.P.E.S. report, Minister. The Children, Young People, Education and Skills departmental report has not been published since 2020. Can you inform the panel if you still intend to publish the report, and if so, when do you plan to publish it?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Would you like to address that? Because I have been bending your ear about that, so you give me an answer.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Yes. In terms of the department's published performance indicators and where the department stands, that has now been fed into the annual report process. There has been an annual report published for the last 2 years; the 2023 annual report has just been published, I believe. In terms of our reporting on educational outcomes, attainment, the department position on workforce, the department position on performance - in terms of our published performance - all of that is captured within that annual report now. So we have been publishing that information.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Would it be useful if you, as a panel, had a briefing - just a brief talk - about that change? Because I can understand why it might be ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think that would solve that problem because I have certainly had that talk myself. It would be a fairly useful thing to do.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, that would be great.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Can you confirm how regularly the school curriculum is reviewed and updated and the process that is involved?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, it is through the Jersey Curriculum Council. That is in the Education Law 1999, Article 16. Jersey Curriculum Council meet termly to look at moves forward, also with the Religious Education Advisory Council to develop the curriculum. New P.S.H.E. guidance, as I mentioned before, has been a part of the curriculum that has been focused on. That came from the Jersey Youth Parliament and Jersey Assembly's drive to change that, which is a good response because it is reactive to what children want to do. The other thing in terms of curriculum, there is always a change in curriculum for schools because of exam laws and the difference and changing. I have got to say, it was the bane of my life, in terms of what is changing. I think we need to be very careful about that in terms of where we go forward. Schools have had a great deal of autonomy in their choice of a curriculum in terms of the board that they use, for example - so, watching this exam, which maths exam - in secondary school. Whether we want to turn that into a universal offering is a very good question. Personally, I am not so sure that is the best thing to do because there are different courses that suit different schools more effectively; which is the best, the teachers know. However, as we move forward, I think we all do need to look at why the provision of certain courses. For example, one of the things I would suggest we do need to look at, in the U.K. there is, and I would call it an obsession, with maths being a level 4 - is it now? - which was the old C grade for every single student as they move forward. Students are retaking that exam many, many times. There are alternatives to reaching that level of mathematical skill and numeracy which could be used, which free our

students from that horrendous experience of going for an exam when they have not been successful many, many times and get the same outcome. I think that is one of the areas of the curriculum, for example, that can be looked at.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. I think you have answered the next part by saying regular updates in every term.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

The Connétable of Grouville:

So I think that has answered that quite correctly.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely. Can I just say though, I would also say some stability is really good for schools. There has been way too much change in the last 2 years in education. It has been a political football in the U.K. and we, because of our use of U.K. exams, have been a victim of that. It also costs an absolute fortune for schools every time a curriculum is changed, so some stability would be welcomed from schools.

[13:45]

The Connétable of Grouville:

I think your offering is giving parents choice as well.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Minister, we are going to move on to the impacts of the industrial action, if I may. Minister, with reference to the industrial action from earlier this year, please can you outline what steps you are taking to foster clear dialogue and rebuild trust with education professionals?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. The first thing is that we have a 3-year stable deal. We have made it clear to teachers: "We value you." And to those who work in schools: "We value you." We want to have some stability. We do not want to have damaging negotiations. I certainly will not be sending letters to schools and individual teachers. I do not think that was the right thing to do and I was very vocal on that. One

of the first things I did when we moved in was to have that dialogue, and we have moved forward. The other thing that we do need to do, though, is continue the dialogue with trade unions. I am very keen that every school has a well-trained rep from the trade unions, because that is a positive thing for schools, so that issues are dealt with much lower down in the tree, if you like, and schools work together with their staff, effectively. That fosters the relationships within the schools, between teaching staff and management, and enables moves forward to be made, particularly when mistakes are made because nobody is perfect. So, that is important. There is also a review that is considering core hours of work, pay scales and progression and supplementary allowances; that is ongoing and that needs clear input as well to give that value to what we are doing. We need to make sure that we have that dialogue with teachers. I really hope that for the next 3 years we do not face industrial action because we have settled the pay deal. That gives us an opportunity to restore those relationships and genuinely value a profession. I may be biased here, but a teaching profession is a really difficult job to do. You are both responsible and guilty for everything, just about in all of our society. What we need to say to those teachers in schools is that: "We value what you are doing. We want to support you as best as we possibly can. Please come and stay here. Work here." Recruitment and retention are vital. That is the best way forward for our children.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I think you have answered the next question that I was going to ask, Minister.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I am reading your mind, Constable. That is a scary place to be.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

I am going to be asking a few questions about C.Y.P.E.S. policies for schools.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

You have got that one.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Okay, sorry. I am going to read ... I was going to read yours and you were going to read mine. Right, okay. Sorry, no, C.Y.P.E.S. will be ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That will be me.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

... several questions from the chair. My next questions will be about capital projects and updates. Please could you provide an update on the progress of ongoing capital projects that received funding commitments in the last Government Plan? For example, the youth club, Samarès School, Mont à L'Abbé School, and so on.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, Mont à L'Abbé School is certainly in progress. The field was purchased; there are concept designs being developed and more detailed designs to be created; there is a budget. That project is around 2027 to 2028 completion at the moment. I will not be giving dates on all of these because they do interweave, if you like, and we need to look ... whenever there are a number of capital projects going on, you have got to be able to provide ... and it may be worth at some point swapping them around so you can get one successfully done as you move into another one. One of the projects obviously is the town primary school; let us deal with that one straight from day one, shall we? I am absolutely in favour of the town primary school, and it is not simply because of demographics, although there is a very interesting thing - I believe from your panel - I read that there are 182 places in Springfield, but within 5 to 10 minutes' walk, there are 477 children living. So I really refute the demographic argument, but it is not just that. It is about provision of the right amount of play space for the children in Springfield and St. Luke's that simply do not have, for a modern education with breakout spaces so that those children with additional needs can be catered for effectively. We cannot do that as effectively as we want to. Do not get me wrong. I go into Springfield weekly; I have been to St. Luke's; I have seen these schools. They work miracles for our children; they work incredibly hard. But compare that to one of the new schools like d'Auvergne and you will see the provision there can be wider. There is also an issue about that project which ... it enables La Passerelle primary school to be developed. We are currently educating some of our most needy primary school children in converted portacabins. Any delay to the project in Gas Place ... the responsibility there is that that will continue longer than we want it to. We have to get on with that project. There is also a need for a secondary school, for La Passerelle, which I think is really important so that we can meet the needs of children we are really struggling to meet the needs of. That, longer term, deals with the not-in-education training, for example. Those projects are so interlinked, as is the project at Rouge Bouillon School way into the future.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

I can say that we did mention the fact that they are so interlinked. Is there any priority, or how are you going to go about making that priority?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, the priority for me is to get Gas Place. We need to get the land, we need ... First of all, I am quite happy to talk around the Council of Ministers. I believe I have an incredibly strong argument and we have support around Council of Ministers ...

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

That is good.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

... so let us put that to bed and move forward. It is a new Council of Ministers; I can accept that. I think we should just get on with it, but I can accept that. Then we can start to talk about the purchase of the land, get planning applications in and get that ball rolling. It needs to be settled before the next election, and way before the next election, so it is not an election issue and we can move forward.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Is it fair to say then you are still in favour of the Gas Place site?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Without a doubt.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Absolutely. Unequivocally I am ...

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

And you will have conversations with the Council of Ministers to reinstate that?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Okay. Thank you.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

“Unequivocally in favour of the Gas Place site,” that can be the headline if you want.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Okay. Yes, we have that now. Thank you, Minister, for that. That was the set of different questions I had for you, but you were quite ... well did you respond to all of them ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There are other projects and we can give you more information as we go and we will keep you informed.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Thank you. We would like an update, yes, and we will communicate with you after that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Excellent.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Next question, the previous Government accepted an amendment that the panel made to the last Government Plan to review funding that the States Assembly had previously approved for Le Rocquier School and the community sports facility, which ... the sum was around £4.7 million. Please, would you confirm whether you intend to review that project and the sports facilities at the school?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, this is a more challenging one. Looking at budgets, that is going to be a real challenge for that decision to happen this year. It may be one of the projects that is delayed for a year, for example. But I do recognise the need at Le Rocquier School for that provision and for the east of the Island. It is about the priorities for different schools and what we get. But again, this is one of the projects where it depends where we can fit it in. I think if we can fit it in earlier, we will; if we cannot, then it needs to be later on. There is also some question of the standard of the pitch. Now, this is not my specialist area, so I am bound to get this wrong. You smile at me, but ... It is a 3G pitch, which is an F.A. (Football Association) standard. If that can be fitted, then I think it can be used wider, yes? It is nothing to do with phone reception. I have done that joke a number of times; it was not funny. But we therefore may attract partial funding from elsewhere if we can get that to work. So there is some proviso ... Do you want to say something?

Associate Director, Innovation, Transformation and Business Support:

All I want to say is there is a desire to move on with this project. As the Minister says, it is kind of marrying up budgets and deliverability. We could obviously be looking at ... the building develops as one part but we could also look at the pitch as another part, which may be able to happen sooner. We have been actively working with our colleagues in I. and E. (Infrastructure and Environment), the headteacher of the school, the sport division as well within Government, to look at how we can

accelerate that pitch part as the first phase of that project. Again, it is working up a design, getting something available that can be delivered and then seeing if we can fit it into the programme.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

So it makes sense ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think we need to move away from the all or nothing approach to some of our capital projects: we cannot do the whole project, so nothing can get done. Well we could perhaps, quicker than we wanted to, get part of that project done to provide some of that facility. Let us get on and do that and then if the other project takes a little bit longer, then it takes a little bit longer, but at least we have got something in place. That is a model I think I would like to see.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Yes. I was really agreeing with that and say, specifically with Le Rocquier School, the sports facility seems to be the greatest in need of priority for that area.

Associate Director, Innovation, Transformation and Business Support:

That is right. I am working with the headteacher; he has been focused as well on if there can be improved outside space with the use of an all-weather, all-year-round pitch, that would help enormously with the curriculum.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Because it will not just serve the school, but serve the wider community. It makes sense that rather than try and have a full project develop, you can ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I have a meeting with the Minister for Infrastructure - I cannot remember off the top of my head when it is - about the use of school facilities in a wider context and how we could do. Certainly that may help with development of some of them in terms of if it is going to be used for something else. That is the joined-up approach that we need to take where we might actually get more done, but - and it is analogous to the Education Law - if we wait to change the whole of the Education Law, we will probably be here for 4 or 5 years, but we could change some key parts of it as we go, to improve things. It means the job is done bit by bit. That is not a piecemeal approach, can I say; that is an intelligent, staged approach, which means things actually get done.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

All right. Thank you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

If I may, just briefly, any addition to our publicly available sporting facilities in the east of the Island; the Connétable of Grouville will be most appreciative because we are desperately needing.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

You are declaring an interest. That is fair enough.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I am most definitely.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

West is not always best.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I will let you have the argument.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I was going to add, though, people have been waiting for years for something in the east of the Island. It does sound to me like this is being deprioritised now.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think there is a realism around the really large projects. However, as we have said, if we can get some of the small parts of those projects which are most effective in place, then we can see some change, some increase in facilities without writing off the whole thing because it becomes ... I think that is what has happened in the past, to be honest. The large, large projects have been lost, but it has not been a staged approach which could get some of the parts done.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Well, maybe something there will be prioritised.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, that is good.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We have not got much time left, but if I can ask about the C.Y.P.E.S. policies for schools, and this is referring to a particular occurrence. Minister, there was a Discrimination Tribunal judgment made against the Minister for Children and Education on 18th January, because of a failure to finalise and

sign the drafts of a record of need for a child or to advise the child's parent of the right of appeal. Please could you advise whether any changes have been implemented to C.Y.P.E.S. policies as a result of that judgment?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, there was a commitment in paragraph 79 of the judgment to first of all undertake a review of all records of needs - R.o.Ns, they are referred to as - and take any necessary action to finalise and sign the documents in accordance with the Education Law and Code, which means effectively, speed up that process of getting them signed, which was the issue in the first place. And to write to all parents and guardians of children with a record of need to inform them of their statutory right to appeal when this has not been brought to their attention, as required by the Education Law and Code. I think also of any judgment like that, it makes us look at the process of records of need and I know that schools and staff have looked at it and thought: "Okay, what can we improve?" The sign of a good school, the sign of a good department, is one that is self-improving. I think that is a really important part of what we want to do in schools, and certainly around this area of record of need.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you. Have those parents already been written to and has that been done?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, they have.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Somebody will have to tell me that.

Group Director, Education:

Yes, a letter went out to all parents of children in receipt of a record of need alerting them. The method is now on the printed document. Every document has the footer that says: "You are invited to appeal if you are not happy with the timeframe."

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Going forward, will C.Y.P.E.S. provide guidance to parents in appealing decisions or documents, such as the contents of a record of need, which they disagree with?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There is a gov dedicated web page that covers this. It gives you information around assessing your child's educational needs, the school year delay or advancement, there is specialist schools and

settings, and there is also a link for support for children with special educational needs. Sean, I do not know if you want to add anything else to that.

Group Director, Education:

If it is helpful, we have a very well-established Parent Carer Forum for the parents and carers of children with special education needs or disabilities, and we are doing workshops this term with them on exactly that, on involving them in developing the record of need process, including ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I have a meeting with them at 3.00 p.m. today. It is purely by coincidence. Genuinely I have a meeting. It will be our first meeting, and they welcomed that meeting as well.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We are 22 seconds early, Minister.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

You do not want to ask anything else, use that 20 seconds?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can we do one more question, perhaps? We are nearly finished.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, of course.

[14:00]

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

This has been something that has been in the media recently. Minister, could you advise whether there are any plans to review C.Y.P.E.S.' transgender guidance for schools?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is being reviewed. I have looked at the policy itself and what it does is effectively say we include all children in our schools. I have looked really carefully around this. There are 15,000 children that go to school every day on our Island. Within those 15,000 children, there will be 15,000 individual situations in their life. Teachers and schools deal with those individual situations every single day

and they do so remarkably well. They do not always get it right, but they get it right on the vast number of cases. If a child is transgender, remember that is a recognised, protected characteristic within our Discrimination Law, which I think gives a context to that as well. If you want to talk legally, schools deal with that I think intelligently, sensibly and will do so with care. I will bring up, for example, I am very keen for not having schools drawn into this wider, if you like - and I do not like this phrase - culture wars around this. Schools are there and are caring towards our young people. They do so every day and they do it well. I would address the issue of toilets, for example. I had a wonderful tour of the toilets at Haute Vallée School. It was 2 students who showed us around; 2 incredibly impressive young people. Articulate, intelligent young people. What they have said was that they have boys' and girls' toilets, but they also have unisex toilets, which are cubicles - and this is the key point that I would like to make - the doors are floor to ceiling and they are safe. They open up into an open space so they can be policed easier - that is the wrong word, but being an ex-teacher that is how I see it - by teaching staff. We were told by those students, when the toilets were different and they were boys' and girls', people were vaping and all of the bullying was happening, the embarrassment to the headteacher. But they dealt with the issue. Now they feel safe to use those toilets and they are open and accessible; there are unisex toilets and there are also boys' and girls' toilets, if they are necessary. Another side issue I will mention - in one of our primary schools in year 6, in one of the corridors as you go through, they have some of these facilities built. They are toilet from floor to ceiling, and I mention that because of some of the, I think, unfair pictures and cartoons that have been published in our local newspaper trying to promote something I would not want to promote about taking pictures and so on and so forth. That is not possible with the doors and the facilities that are set up. They also have a sink inside so they are polite. But the side issue of that is, in year 6 they will put period products in there. Some girls in year 6 will start their periods. The boys who might use those toilets want to know what this is about; they can be educated. We may have a generation of young boys who grow up not being fearful of talking about periods. That is another positive on that side. This is not about taking away protected spaces for any gender; this is about increasing the safety of our spaces for all of our children. I think it is a really important point. Schools do a good job. They can also monitor the use of those toilets if there is somebody vulnerable who has been in there a long time, for example; there is a practicality. If anyone is concerned, I would invite them. Come and see what is actually happening in schools because that is the key.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Very importantly, it seems like it gives the students the choice and that is so important.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. In one of our primary schools, it was really lovely. I went to see the school council thing, just - I have got to say this - and they did not like their toilets. They just said they were - what was the phrase they used? - they said they were smelly or something. So school council decided - they got them painted, cleaned up, decided on what they were going to be. Still boys' and girls' toilets, separate, that is what they wanted. That is what happens. If we listen to children and we act on their wishes, then we will be successful.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you. Can I just say, when will the review of the guidance be completed?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I would hope as soon as possible, because I think we need to draw a line under this.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is a working party, so it is going to be ongoing. They are currently looking at the current legislation and guidance. Ultimately, like the Minister said, we just want to ensure that young people are safeguarded. So there is not necessarily a termination date; I envision this probably being a work in progress.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. I thought there might be because there is a published document that can be seen on ...

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There was a published document that was ...

Group Director, Education:

The document, indeed, is the guidance for schools, it is not a law. That is being reviewed with, as the Minister says, stakeholder engagement, including a number of interested parties who we would welcome to that.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It comes off the back of the independent review of inclusive education, which highlighted that all policies needed to be up to date from a perspective of inclusive practices across the board.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We do not want to remove ... I understand that if we update it, but if you remove the guidance policy, you have a vacuum. Let us leave it there until it is updated. I think that is an effective way to go

about it and I think we can do that. But I just want to say thanks to schools for what they do with all of our children, to be quite frank.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

All right. We only had one more question, but we will send that to you in writing if that is okay.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Thank you very much.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

All right. Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you.

[14:05]