

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Early Years Review Sub-Panel

MONDAY, 5th NOVEMBER 2007

Panel:

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence (Chairman)

Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary

Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier

Dr. C. Hamer (Panel Adviser)

Witnesses:

Ms. A. Curzons (d'Auvergne School - representing States primary school nurseries)

Ms. R. Evans (d'Auvergne School - representing States primary school nurseries)

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence (Chairman):

I would like to welcome you here today and to thank you for coming. A little bit of housekeeping to start. You have seen, I hope, our terms of reference and there will be copies on the desk in front of you. Also you are covered by privilege here today over anything that you say and there should be a copy of that procedure there in front of you. The idea of having the hearings is that we can ask questions and try and get factual evidence to report on in our review and the process that we follow is that we will send you a copy of the transcript for you to read through and decide whether there are any mistakes or differences between what you have said and what has been recorded. It will be a public document so it will go on to the scrutiny website and you may well be quoted when we produce our report. So I hope that does not cause you any problems. These mikes are to amplify our voices for the recording. They do not make our voices any louder. So I will start by introducing myself, and I am Deputy Mezbourian, the Chairman of the panel, and on my left is ...

Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary:

Deputy Juliette Gallichan of St. Mary. I am Vice-Chairman.

Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier:

Deputy Pitman of St. Helier.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

This lady is our adviser for this review.

Dr. C. Hamer:

I am Dr. Cathy Hamer, I am an early years teacher and childhood health and educational psychologist specialising in early years, currently working with National Children's Bureau, Early Childhood Unit.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

You have met our officer, Tim, at your school, in fact. Now I understand that you requested a copy of the questions that we would have for you today. Is that right? Maybe I have misunderstood that.

Ms. A. Curzons (d'Auvergne School):

No. Should we have done?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

No, I thought it was somewhat unusual but that was fine. I just wondered if you had had a copy, because what we normally do at our hearings, and we had one half an hour before you arrived, people come to speak to us and they tend to give a very brief presentation or overview of their thoughts and how they are connected to the early years education. But since we have already spoken to you at your school, although you are very welcome to speak to us initially, we do have a few questions prepared to ask you. So how would you like to do it? Do you want to give us some thoughts on how the nursery is working at your school?

Ms. A. Curzons:

I wonder if it would be better if we perhaps started with the questions, because then possibly out of that will come some of the discussion. To be quite frank we have not really prepared anything as such and we are not very well prepared, are we? But I did not realise that we could request the questions or anything like that. So perhaps if we start.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

All right. If we started and then as you say we can get discussion and debate going based on what we ask you. Just randomly we wondered what the criteria are to allocate places at your nursery.

Ms. A. Curzons:

There are sets of criteria across the board and it comes down to we have to take a percentage of children in catchment and so on and out of catchment and I think it is 80:20, 80 per cent within the area and I think it is 20 per cent outside the area. We also look at siblings; we also look at children's needs; we look at families' needs, and that is it. What we do currently is that parents will register. They usually ring up and try and register. They register over the phone and what we tend to do is invite the parents in, whether it is for nursery reception classes or both, and out of those meeting when we meet the

parents a lot of other issues come up. What happened recently is that parents really are not sure of the procedures and unless they see the *Evening Post*, which not all families take anyway, where there is a guidance of how to apply for nursery places, they miss out, I think. So we do invite parents in and we do fill out the forms together, whether it be for nursery, reception and so on. We do go through the criteria and then, once our lists are complete, on a certain date we send them up to the department and then the places are allocated by the department rather than individual schools.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So when you say parents tend to phone in and then you will invite them to you, you are waiting for them to approach you rather than you or the department perhaps going out to the catchment area from which you said you had about 80 per cent?

Ms. R. Evans (d'Auvergne School):

Yes. Nobody sends parents a letter to say that they need to put their child's name down at a nursery. It is the parent's job, basically, to sit down and have a look at it.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Do you have any say over who is taken into your nursery? Can you ask for additional children to be taken or could you refuse?

Ms. A. Curzons:

At the moment our nursery is a 30-place nursery and at the moment we have 31 children, which I think is in line with all the States nurseries. At the moment. But we have pretty good links with The Bridge and if a name comes through or a family is known that perhaps has a particular need or there is a child with a particular need then I would highlight that on the form and on the list to make sure that those families are prioritised.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Although there is one person responsible for allocating the places, do they ever contact you to ask?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Oh, yes. I mean, we get the list back of the places that we can offer and then we can just scan through the list to ensure that the children that we have highlighted as perhaps having a specific need or a family that have a specific need and that does not matter, whether they are in catchment or out of catchment, that does not really matter. Then we can just make sure that they are allocated. Even then sometimes even when the lists are made we have made a place for a child it sometimes comes out, perhaps nearer the time, when the children are nearer to starting occasionally a child will come through the system and you think: "Oh, we will probably take that child" because again there is a specific need. Then we might

be say over the 30, perhaps at 31, and then if a child leaves during the course of the year then I will not replace that child. We will carry that child. Because we have the staffing we can do that.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

What is your ratio of staffing?

Ms. A. Curzons:

We have one nursery teacher.

Ms. R. Evans:

There are 2 full-time nursery officers and we have one part-time teaching assistant as well but not every States nursery will have that. It is just Ms. Curzons thought it would be beneficial for us to have a part-time member of staff as well just to help with the learning and the settling and the general day-to-day running of the nursery and it is highly beneficial to have that extra member of staff. We also virtually all of the time have a student as well, so there are often maybe 5 adults in the nursery every day.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I just ask you, is your intake all at once in September?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes, we stagger it.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

When you mentioned it was good to have that part-time person in I was thinking that I bet you need more than one sometimes.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes. What we tend to do is once we know our lists and who is coming in then Rhian and the staff usually in the back end of June/July start to make ... right from the word go, I will just go back a little bit further, once we know ... we allocate places basically and we write to parents offering them the place. They contact us back again. It is usually the process is finished, sorted by about the second week in March. We then invite the parents in to meet us usually in May and we go through various business and an information evening and then the children come in also in July for an afternoon, for a teddy bears' picnic, and also the staff go to visit the families. So by September we are getting to know the families pretty well and then we stagger the children in over the course usually of about a week.

Deputy S. Pitman:

All the positions that you have, all the spaces, are they all full-time or some part-time?

Ms. A. Curzons:

They are. That seems to be what the parents are asking for. Sometimes what we do, particularly for those children who are very young, the July/August birthdays some of those children are only just 3, we say that if they want to see how the children are, first of all, and if the children are exhausted by lunchtime, because it is a busy day, really, but if they are tired by lunchtime and the parents are happy to do so, then they might take their children home at lunchtime, but there are very few.

Ms. R. Evans:

This year we have not had one starting off as part-time or anything, but last year we had a couple that came and by lunchtime they were absolutely exhausted and mum or dad would come and take them for the afternoon but they gradually always end up full-time at least by Easter.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

But you have that flexibility to offer that to a parent?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes, I think one has to be flexible, to be quite honest with you, because these are very young children, particularly the summer birthdays. They are very little.

Ms. R. Evans:

For the general well-being of the child, really, just to ease them in.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

It is a massive change, is it not? I am just thinking when my son, who is now going to be 16, started at primary, not at nursery, I had to go and get him at lunchtime. I was not able to leave him there for the whole day, even at primary school. Has there been a real sea change in the way timings and hours have been put forward?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Well, I remember my own son, he was the same. He could not start until January because he was a summer birthday. Years ago you could not start and then it was part-time, as you say, going full-time in the term that they are 5. This is into the reception class. Now the children come into the reception class, they all come full-time from September. That is into the reception class.

Ms. R. Evans:

There are no January intakes for nursery or reception.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

So that has obviously impacted on the nursery class that you get them in at.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Ms. Curzons, could you tell me, did you work under the old policy of part-time positions?

Ms. A. Curzons:

No. In terms of reception?

Deputy S. Pitman:

Yes.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes, as a teacher I have done, because I used to teach reception and what I used to call infants and is now called key stage 1. Also speaking as a parent of a child with a summer birthday I was very pleased when all the children came in in September. For some children they came into the reception classes as I say part-time January and then full-time from May or April/May time and then they went up into year 1 only having a term and a half schooling. Certainly from my point of view now as a parent and as a teacher you would see some of the children, particularly I have to say the boys, they would then go into the next class and before you know it some of these boys who do - a lot of children like hands-on active learning - they have only been in school for a term and a half and, of course, in comparison with children who have been in school for 3 terms you could not expect them, in terms of the learning continuum to be at the same level. If you are not careful sometimes these children can be labelled, whereas that is not fair because they have only been in for half the amount of schooling. So I was really very pleased when they all started to come in in September and you just alter the curriculum to suit the children. That is what we do, really, both in nursery and reception.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Do you believe the system that they have now on a full-time basis is more beneficial for the child than a part-time?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Are we talking about nursery or reception?

Deputy S. Pitman:

Nursery.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Nursery now, yes.

Ms. R. Evans:

It is very beneficial that they all have that full-time experience before they go into reception. They are used to a full day and they are used to the system of the day basically. Also, with our nursery children they get to experience going into reception and having that mix-up time. At the start of the year, like we said earlier, some of the children are very young and they do struggle with that full day. So easing them in eventually by Easter they would all be full-time anyway.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So all your children are 30 hours at nursery?

Ms. R. Evans:

Yes.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

What are those hours?

Ms. R. Evans:

We open our doors at 8.30 a.m. for the parents to come in and settle their children and then we end our day at 2.45 p.m.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Then there is a sort of a staggered lunch and the children are grouped during lunchtime so that they are not all eating together. It is more of a social occasion as opposed to everybody eating together. It has very much a family feel in the nursery.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Can I just clarify; does that mean that every child gets 12 months in nursery?

Ms. R. Evans:

Yes, they all start ...

Ms. A. Curzons:

Well, September to July.

Ms. R. Evans:

Yes, September to July. Yes, the academic year.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Yes, that is fine.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Can I go back to allocating children a place at your nursery; do you keep a waiting list?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

What sort of order do you keep it in? Is it when it has been received or do you fix it in a particular order of priority?

Ms. A. Curzons:

To be honest with you, we do have a waiting list. Once the places are allocated then we have a list of children who are on a waiting list. I have to say we do not use it very often because places are sort of highly valued and once a child comes into nursery, unless they almost leave the Island they do come to us. But I suppose, as I say, nearer the time when the nursery starts in September again, by that time we usually, primary heads and Trisha Tumelty, who is the parenting leader really, along with the Child Care Trust ... it is quite a network, really, between us all, as I say. Very often near that sort of beginning, that start time in September, there may be a child or a family that will come through that has a specific need. So, if there were a space and people were to contact us that would be the family that would get priority and that sort of tends to be how it works.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Who would decide that?

Ms. A. Curzons:

It is through liaison, really, and discussion with the parenting, social services and health services. It is a whole network of people that we flagged up.

Dr. C. Hamer:

So, it does not go back to the E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture) to make the decision?

Ms. A. Curzons:

No, it would not necessarily go back to E.S.C. for the decision but it would probably be flagged up with E.S.C. if there were a family. Sometimes they would contact us and say: "There is a family here, have

you got a space?" Then we would look at that. Failing that, as I say, if there is a list then we would go on the list of needs, really.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

You mentioned Health and Social Services. Is there is an adequate link between Health and Social Services and yourselves? Could it be improved?

Ms. A. Curzons:

I suppose it could always be improved. The beauty of the nursery is that parents come into the nursery a lot; they come into reception as well. The children, by law, come into school, into the reception class, but because there is choice about the nursery parents come, do they not?

Ms. R. Evans:

Yes. We build up quite a strong relationship with the parents, really. This year we have started pop-in sessions for them to come and experience the children learning because they are sometimes not quite sure what goes on at nursery. So they come in and we share their experiences or they just come in and help out. Some children do not even bother going to their parents when they come in to have a little look round but they will go and help other children. But with those pop-in sessions - and we have a learning evening and we have our welcome evening and we have our home visits and we have just had a settling-in consultation evening - all those different things help us to build up the relationship that will flag up any issues that they have and anything that we feel we need to sort out.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Also, again via The Bridge and Child Care Trust, there has been some very good in-service training with regard to parenting and how to support parents and families which, again, the staff, particularly the nursery staff and some of the teachers from the school, have been very involved with. So, again, we can be supportive. Although we do have links with the health visitors, we are also using the facilities, i.e. training, so that we train ourselves up to support families. Some of the sessions in service training take place at The Bridge. The more that we are talking with the different agencies the more positive the relationships will become. I think that is happening, very much so.

Ms. R. Evans:

As well as The Bridge, there is speech and language as well. We have a strong relationship with therapists as well who come in and help out with the children or train us to carry out the activities that they would to help us reinforce what they are doing at the Speech and Language Unit. We can always send the children to them as well. So, we have got a good relationship with ...

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

You would know who to contact?

Ms. R. Evans:

Oh, definitely, yes.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes.

Ms. R. Evans:

They have provided us with a sort of chart that we can have a look at to see if we should have concerns about the children when we have nursery or reception in set time. A few weeks ago we had a nursery incident. A child psychologist came and we had the Speech and Language people come and talk to us just to have ongoing information and knowledge about everything that is going on.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

For you those people who are working in ...

Ms. R. Evans:

With the children every day, yes.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Then that way, again, we can liaise and support parents and families by working with individual children. It just is much more relaxed that way when it is coming through the nursery. There are some good links.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

We know how many places you have in your nursery. What is your intake into reception? Have you got one stream or 2?

Ms. A. Curzons:

We have got 2 classes into reception.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

So you can happily accommodate all the people who are in your nursery class, even though they are not necessarily from catchment?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Well, no. The reception class operates sort of slightly differently. We have to offer, as I say, I think it is

something like 80:20 within catchment. We have to offer out of catchment places because not all the schools have a nursery class, whereas in reception there is a higher percentage of in-catchment children.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I was just thinking you, obviously from what you have said, have invested a lot into helping this family relationship and benefiting the children that way and you must feel a little aggrieved when perhaps you cannot carry that through because they are in a different school afterwards.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes, I take your point. We do but then we sort of seize the moment, really, and you do what you can and when you can.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Is there a mechanism where you can pass what you have gathered on?

Ms. R. Evans:

Oh, yes.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes, for sure. Yes, we do do that. Generally speaking, I think out of the last intake 24 of the children came on into d'Auvergne, into the reception classes and then 6 went on to different settings and that is fine. It works okay.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Ms. Evans, you mentioned a moment ago a welcome evening that you had had and that you have pop-in sessions and a counselling evening. What was that?

Ms. R. Evans:

It was a settling-in consultation, yes.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Sorry, a settling-in consultation?

Ms. R. Evans:

Yes. It was just a basic sort of 15-minute chat with each parent just to let them know how their child is settling in. Even though we see them daily, it was just nice to sit down and have time to chat with the parents and they could raise any issues with us or we could speak to them if we had anything we needed to tell them or speak to them about. They are really beneficial those evenings.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Is that something that is peculiar to your nursery? Did you set it up? Have you decided upon the sessions or do you have guidelines from Education on how to run the nursery?

Ms. R. Evans:

There were no particular guidelines to tell me to do that. We just thought it would be beneficial for the parents, the children and ourselves to have more and more contact with parents really. So we set up those ourselves.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So, the perhaps different public nurseries give different experiences to the children and, indeed, to the parents who go there?

Ms. A. Curzons:

I think that, again, through in-service training we are constantly ... obviously parents are our partners. So, whether it is d'Auvergne or any of the other primary schools, I guess we probably do things slightly differently. But I would guess that each of the primary schools who have a nursery would be working in a similar way and would be supporting families and parents in a similar way. It works this way for us. I mean, d'Auvergne is still quite a new school; it is quite a young school. We are only 2 years old so we are trying. This year the pop-in sessions are quite ... well this is the first time we have done that ourselves and we might say: "Okay, that worked really well we will do it again, possibly next term, because it works well." It is very much in conjunction with the parents; what we feel the parents would benefit from and what they want, really. The rest of the school works in a similar way although our sessions for parent consultation, that takes place in January for the rest of the school. But because the children are so little we felt that the nursery should do it straightaway. The rest of the school they get a little report home saying how the children have settled into the new academic year and so on which I think has been well received by the parents. Then, as I say, we start the rest of the school in January with sessions.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

But as head teacher it is entirely up to you how you run and manage your nursery?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes, it is really. It is up to us and obviously Yasmine Thebault is very much involved. She is the adviser for Early Years and as I say, there is a lot of in-service training. Yasmine comes in; she is very quick to spot things if things are not quite right, but it works well because she is very positive, very supportive.

Ms. R. Evans:

She is always on the end of the phone so if I need anything, even if it just down to a resource or a bit of advice, I can just phone her.

Ms. A. Curzons:

We also do encourage going to visit other nurseries. Yasmine is very good at flagging up because we were concerned last time a little bit about lunchtimes. We wanted to make them more sort of family oriented; we wanted it to be more of a continuation of the morning and then seamless transition into the afternoon. We were chatting to Yasmine and saying what do other nurseries do and you went along to other nurseries to see. So, it is very supportive. You can pick the best sort of practice, really. In that way you think: "That is quite good but we are going to do it this way", as well.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

How are you regulated?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Again, it is mainly through Yasmine, through the children themselves and through the parents. If things are not right you certainly will know very, very quickly, with regard to the children. But at the end of the day, I am the lead learner in the school, whether it is nursery or year 6, and it is my job to make sure that these children are happy, that they are learning and that they are secure.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

What is the ratio of staff to children in nursery class?

Ms. R. Evans:

There are 31 children and 4 staff.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

That is the standard ratio, is it, throughout the Education Ministry?

Ms. A. Curzons:

No.

Ms. R. Evans:

No, it is not.

Ms. A. Curzons:

No. We put a school assistant in the mornings because we feel that the children need that extra support in terms of communication, really. The more adult modelling that the children have within their play, within their learning, the better. If you have got adults there asking ... you have copies of the planning and the planning is really very intricate. So the more adults you have to deliver the learning to support the learning, the better. Children, as we know, they do need as much practice as they can have at listening, communicating and talking, using the right language, so that it makes sense that the more adults you have ... but, obviously, that is at a cost because it means we do not have that support higher up the school. The T.A. (teaching assistant) that goes in there obviously cannot be in 2 places at once but we value early years learning so highly we have got to get those children off with the right start, both in nursery and reception, year 1, that I do tend to take the support from higher up the school to put in there.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Is that always kept at 4 staff to 31 then, from what you were saying?

Ms. A. Curzons:

She is in there in the morning. She is there from 8.00 ...

Ms. R. Evans:

8.20 a.m. until 1.00 p.m.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Until 1.00 p.m.

Deputy S. Pitman:

You feel that is a sufficient number of staff to children?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes, I think so.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

What was the previous experience of all of those staff working in the nursery?

Ms. R. Evans:

I am a teacher and I have had reception year 1 and year 2 experience before that and a term at year 6 as well. The 2 nursery officers: one nursery officer has been a nursery officer for nearly 15 years and does a lot with parenting and people. Our other nursery officer has been a nursery officer for 5 or 6 years. She came straight out of college and into our school or into St. Mark's previously. Our teaching

assistant Lisa Lewis is a trained paediatric nurse and then had children and finished nursing and has just come back in to teaching-assistant work part time.

Ms. A. Curzons:

It is interesting because she was a teaching assistant higher up the school and then when I suggested that she went into the nursery she was not too sure about it. She said: "I am not too sure about this because I really like to focus on learning." Then she went into the nursery and she just said: "No, this is absolutely fascinating to see how much these children can take on and to observe them learn." She said: "It is absolutely fascinating" and she is very happy.

Ms. R. Evans:

Yes, she really enjoys it.

Deputy S. Pitman:

For the staff that have come from teaching backgrounds, firstly, before putting them into nursery class would they have some sort of childcare course to go on?

Ms. R. Evans:

The nursery officers?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Or the teachers?

Deputy S. Pitman:

No, the teaching class that go to the nursery.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Well, you would really try and ensure that the nursery teacher had had some sort of, what I call infant experience, either within reception, year 1 or year 2. Although I have known an excellent nursery teacher go from year 6, the 10 and 11 yearolds, into the nursery. Again, this is where Yasmine Thebault is very good. She knows that if a teacher is going to take on the nursery that perhaps has not had a huge amount of experience then she is very supportive in that way and will work alongside. But invariably you look very carefully at your team. The nursery teacher and the nursery officers do work very much as a team and they plan together for the children. In our situation when Rhian came in we had 2 experienced nursery officers and so I am sure you found that very ...

Ms. R. Evans:

Oh, hugely beneficial. I came across from Wales as well, so I was not completely familiar with the way

... obviously it is very similar to the education system back in Wales but not exactly the same as within nursery. So it was handy for to have those 2 nursery officers with experience just to show me the basic ropes, really, and then I could put my teaching into practice with them.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Do yourself and your assistants have ongoing training at all?

Ms. R. Evans:

We have nursery inset meetings quite regularly, maybe 2 or 3 a year; we had one a few weeks ago. Yes, we have sharing good practice. There are several bits and bobs that go on to help us. We have critical skill ...

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Who is that arranged through?

Ms. R. Evans:

Normally through Yasmine and through the States; we go through the department. We have critical skills training that is across the board at the moment and our nursery officers have been trained in that, as well as myself.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Do you have first aid training?

Ms. R. Evans:

Yes. We are all first aid trained.

Ms. A. Curzons:

You see, it is beneficial the training because it is not just about the nursery, it is about good learning. The staff in the nursery have a full range of access to in-service training. At the moment, as I say, the critical skills training has been high profile for the last 3 or 4 years, really. So, you have all had access to that because there is no reason why the nursery children cannot work in a similar way. Assessment for learning has been a big driver as well for the past 4 or 5 years as a States E.S.C. initiative. Again, the staff have had full involvement within that. There is specific nursery training going on but there is also a general training that you have access to as part of the school.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Do you feel that it would be more beneficial for the child to have a teacher who has previous experience and has qualifications in childcare? You probably know the private providers, they are all qualified in

childcare.

Ms. A. Curzons:

I think you are really wanting somebody who is very passionate about early years, that is what you want. It is, of course, about caring for children. I mean, if the children are not cared for, if the children are not happy - and that is not just the nursery, that is for all our children - they are not going to learn. I am not avoiding what you are asking me but it a bit of a difficult one to answer really because we are very passionate about what we do and how we care for the children. As I say, if they are not happy they are not going to learn and that is just not the nursery, that does not matter, it can be a year 5 child. But certainly training is a big aspect of it. You would not just let somebody loose in the nursery if they really did not know what they were doing and that is part of my job to monitor that.

Dr. C. Hamer:

I have just got a few questions for you. First of all, what links do you have with childcare providers? So if, for example, you have got a working parent who needs childcare beyond the finish of nursery what would happen then? Would they be collected by somebody?

Ms. R. Evans:

A few children get collected by child minders who we have become very aware of at the start, who we make sure they meet those children. A few of our children go to Centre Point and the minibus comes to collect them at the end of the day and they go off with them.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Do you have any contact, planning-wise, with those, in terms of continuity of experience?

Ms. R. Evans:

We discuss with them what they have done that day to make sure that they inform their parents and provide them with bits and bobs. But there is no actual planning that goes on.

Dr. C. Hamer:

So, you do not know what they do?

Ms. R. Evans:

No.

Dr. C. Hamer:

They do not know either. Let me move on to a different question. Are you the subject of any inspections at all?

Ms. A. Curzons:

No, we are not and that is at the moment in terms of things like Ofsted (Office of Standards in Education) inspections, we have come away very much from that. So, no, at the moment I think the E.S.C. are looking at a way of monitoring more closely. But what we do a lot of is we monitor ourselves but we also invite other people in to come and look at a specific area of the curriculum and that would include nursery because that is the beginnings, as it were. So, in terms of monitoring, it is not an inspection as such. In some ways, what we do is more rigorous, I think, because there is nobody more critical than we are of ourselves. A lot of the head teachers on the Island have had training for inspection and, I would say, a vast majority of the head teachers, including myself, went over to Guernsey quite frequently to join Ofsted inspection teams in Guernsey. I have been several times and that has been quite a good experience. So, if you want to look at a specific area we are pretty good at it, really.

Dr. C. Hamer:

I am just trying to get the feel for sort of the comparisons made. If you were in the private sector then you would have environmental health coming to see you. You would have the fire service, et cetera; you would have a regulation visit obviously who would look at lots of different things. That is not the case?

Ms. A. Curzons:

No.

Dr. C. Hamer:

If you get children coming who have been in private nurseries or parish nurseries for their previous experience from a fairly young age, what information and what contact do you have about those children and what would those be?

Ms. R. Evans:

It depends on the nursery that they have been to, really. Some of them will phone you and have a chat about that child. Some of them will make an appointment to come and see you or sometimes the nursery sends the end-of-year report that they would have sent to the parents. Sometimes the parents talk to you as well. We talk to the parents about what experience the children have had before they come into us. It varies from nursery to nursery.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Did you not say you have taught in reception previously?

Ms. R. Evans:

Yes.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Can you see differences between children who have been through the States nursery system?

Ms. R. Evans:

I have not taught in reception in Jersey, yes.

Dr. C. Hamer:

All right, okay, not a fair question then. Would you anticipate these kids? **[Laughter]**

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I was going to ask what the curriculum is that you provide in the nursery.

Ms. R. Evans:

We follow the Foundation Stage, the 6 areas of learning: communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development, physical development and personal and social. That is the 6 areas that we cover but we sort of tend to focus on maybe a topic sometimes raised by the children that really inspires them to learn or we think of something that fit in at the moment. We try and reach those 6 areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors. They have a whole range of hands-on experiences; a huge range of different learning activities through the week or 2 weeks or 3 weeks or however long we choose to stay on that topic for.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I know you have only been in existence for 2 years but during that time have you noticed that your children go on to a wide range of schools or do they tend to move up into your reception class? How many move elsewhere?

Ms. R. Evans:

I think it was 26 last year, was it not?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes. It is the vast majority that tend to come to d'Auvergne. I am not sure what the percentage is going to be this year but last year I think it was 26, the year before it was 24. So the vast majority do come to d'Auvergne, which is great. But having said that, if they do go off elsewhere, that is fine too. We will liaise with wherever they are going and hand over information.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Ms. Curzons, a question that will be a good one for you, I think. Do you consider that there is a relationship between the child's preschool experience and their performance in school? I am not sure if someone has asked a similar question.

Dr. C. Hamer:

It was a question I was sort of getting near.

Ms. A. Curzons:

I think it is huge. I just do not doubt that it is not just the child's academic ability at all; it is the whole social, emotional ... it is the link with the parents. The children are very secure. When they come in to the reception class it is not new to them. You have obviously been into d'Auvergne, and the way that the nursery and the reception classes are very close together and they do link up quite a lot, particularly this term. Our nursery children that went up to reception, some of those children are only just 4. So, they are still very little but they still mix in quite a lot with the nursery and they go outside. They have what is called mix-up afternoons where all the staff get to know all the children and the children they mix up. They do lots of learning together. So by the time they come into reception they are absolutely ... the only difference really is the fact that they are wearing a uniform and they are very proud of their uniform when they come into reception.

Ms. R. Evans:

They sometimes show it every day.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I just ask you, sort of developing that, as a head teacher do you feel that you are in a really privileged position because your school has got a nursery attached?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes, for sure. I was absolutely delighted when I knew that d'Auvergne was to have a nursery. It was really exciting from my point of view. I have always been very pro early years. That is where I spent the bulk of my time either in reception teaching reception classes, year 1, year 2, for many years. I was deputy head at Rouge Bouillon School for 4 years and I was manager of the nursery at Rouge Bouillon. So I was just delighted to be taking on ... it is a privilege because there are just so many benefits really, as I say. One of the big benefits is getting to know the families so well. As I say, these little ones that come in it is very good for them in terms of, not just their academic but it is the social and the emotional security. It just has huge spin offs and for the whole school. Our older children, they mix in quite a lot with the little ones and the year 6 children are 10 and 11 year-olds. They come down and they play with the children during lunchtime. It really makes it very much a family ...

Ms. R. Evans:

Very family oriented.

Ms. A. Curzons:

A real family feel and quite a few of the nursery children have brothers and sisters within the school and the nursery is very visible so then they will be outside playing and the bigger ones will be outside playing and they will chat together over the sort of fence and it is lovely.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

The Minister's stated aim is to provide all 3 and 4 year-olds with 20 hours of nursery care education. Has there been any consultation with you about how that might be delivered, because at the moment you are providing 30 hours?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Not really.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So how do you imagine it may impact upon you?

Ms. A. Curzons:

I am not sure, to be honest with you. Certainly what we do is we would make sure that the children would get a really beneficial time. I am not sure at the moment, how that would work. But I think we believe so much in early years that we would, obviously after consultation, make it work. I do not know, to be quite honest.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I wondered whether any consultation has taken place with you about how you change the hours of some children that may go back to morning and afternoon sessions. But you have not had any discussions on that?

Ms. A. Curzons:

No.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you. Just a very broad question, unless anyone else has one? What, Ms. Curzons, do you think is required for the effective delivery of early years care and education for children?

Ms. A. Curzons:

I think number one is that you have to have a good understanding of child development. I think you have to understand how a child, a 3 year-old, ticks; what is the makeup of that child. I think that you have to be very interested, more than that, passionate about giving each child the best deal that you can. But you do have to understand child development. You know, children of that age are egocentric. They are going to be egocentric. That is what they are. Of course they have share and they have to learn to share and they have to work in teams and all the rest of it but you have to really understand child development. I think that that is crucial. Children of that age they learn by doing and that is the same, I think, as all really. They really do, so it is no good sitting them down for hour upon hour asking them to read and to write and to do all those, no way. They need to be active learners and this is where the planning comes in to ensure that the children are covering the right skills and the right knowledge that these children need. But really a lot of it is about the right skills. So I would say, number one understand child development, understand how they tick.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Can I just ask one more question to follow up from that? What are you delivering to the children in your nursery? Are you delivering education or care?

Ms. R. Evans:

Both, definitely both. We obviously care for our children, highly care for our children, but our aim is to educate them as well through a caring environment.

Deputy S. Pitman:

You do not define them as 2 different things, education and care?

Ms. R. Evans:

No, they just go together, definitely go together.

Ms. A. Curzons:

You cannot have one without the other, really.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I was just going to ask, following the response you gave to Deputy Mezbourian's question, a good understanding of child development is the essential number one thing, do you have access to specialist psychologists - I am thinking, particularly from other departments - that can broaden out your understanding?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes, we do.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Now that we have completed this question and answer session - because we have done, I think, we have covered all of the questions we had here - is there anything you would like to ask us or tell us about? About the review or ...?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes. Where does this go from here?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Well, what we do is we collect background information. We have got 2 files like this, and evidence, and we have visited yourselves and private nursery providers. Private nursery providers are also coming to speak to us. We have interviewed the Minister and Mario Lundy and we are meeting them again on Friday with follow-up questions that we have decided upon, based on the hearings that we have had. Then eventually we will be preparing a report which will be presented as a States report and it will be looked at by the Minister. In that we intend, or I believe we will be, making some recommendations based on everything that we have done during the review. The Minister has 2 months in which to respond to those recommendations, which he will do formally. If we make a very good recommendation - that we think is very good - and he does not follow it through or decides to take no notice of it we, as politicians, are able to bring a proposition to the House ourselves to perhaps try and get that through as a policy of some kind. I think it is another report on childcare over here and education; it is another in a long line of reports, as we have discovered from the work we have been doing, but because it has this political connection then hopefully it will result in some possible changes. We are hoping to have it produced by the end of this year, the beginning of next year.

Deputy S. Pitman:

All those taking part in the review may get a copy.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Right.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Did you hear that?

Ms. A. Curzons:

Right. So a huge ...

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

It is a mammoth task. In fact, since we have started it we have realised just how big and how broad it is and it is trying to collate everything and tie things together.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Yes.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I think everyone has finished with the questions. I would like to thank you both for coming to speak to us. As I say, you will be given a copy of the transcript in due course, possibly by next week. Thank you for your time.

Ms. A. Curzons:

Thank you.

Ms. R. Evans:

Thank you.