

2018.02.20

7 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier of the Minister for Education regarding the work of the Department to enable students to engage with the democratic process: [OQ.36/2018]

What work, if any, is being undertaken by the Education Department to enable students to take part in the democratic process and engage with the upcoming election campaign?

Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (Assistant Minister for Education - rapporteur)

The States Greffe and the Department, especially the Jersey Youth Service, will host a young person's hustings at the St. James Centre. It is likely to take place out of school hours and the team are planning to put on transport for students who wish to attend. Voter registration forms will be available at the events. The States Greffe have kindly commissioned a Love Theatre production, who will visit all schools over the next few months, again supported by the Jersey Youth Service team who will help students to complete registration forms at the performance. They have also developed a lesson plan to explain Jersey politics to young people and sharing this with schools. As well as ongoing learning, the department has been working with the States Greffe to support their attempts to improve participation in elections. Since last summer they have been holding refresher sessions for teachers and other staff so that they can better advise their students. Jersey children now learn about the Island's political system and how to take part in it at all stages, not just in the run-up to elections. I believe that is an essential part of education and that is why it is written into the Jersey curriculum. As in previous years, we will also use our social media to promote the JE campaign where it can reach more than 5,000 people through the Education Facebook and Twitter feeds.

3.7.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I wish the theatre group the very best of luck finding a way to explain our overly-complicated and incoherent political system. Could I ask the Minister, a lot of the things that she has listed will be voluntary for those students, depending on how interested they already are? Could I ask if there are plans in the schools to hold assemblies in the immediate period before the election to explain how the system works and how they vote? The reason I ask this question is I remember when I was at school we had teachers who would refer to the election as "that thing I am not supposed to talk about" because some of them felt that it was actively inappropriate for schools to be talking about politics, and I would just like her to confirm with me that that attitude is no longer the case in any of our schools.

The Deputy of Trinity:

I am sure things have moved on since the Deputy was at school. Yes, as I say, it is written into the Jersey curriculum about the importance of voting, voter participation, how to register, and the importance of a democratic process. As I said, that is now written in the Jersey curriculum.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Final supplementary? No. I will pause for a moment. Deputy Tadier, you were not here for your question. I am assuming you had not realised question 7 had dropped away, would that be correct?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, apologies to the Assembly, Sir, I was just caught out on that and I was coming back to check when my question was coming up, so I am happy to ask it at the end.

The Deputy Bailiff:

We will ask it at the end. In my view that is a reasonable excuse.