

STATES OF JERSEY



SCHOOL EXAM RESULTS (S.R.6/2011): RESPONSE OF THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE

**Presented to the States on 15th August 2011
by the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture**

STATES GREFFE

**SCHOOL EXAM RESULTS (S.R.6/2011):
RESPONSE OF THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE**

Ministerial Response to: S.R.6/2011
Review title: School Exam Results
Scrutiny Panel: Education and Home Affairs

Introduction

The Scrutiny Panel does not appear to have taken sufficient account of the complex nature of the Island's education system, which includes a high percentage of students enrolled in the fee-paying sector and the transfer of students to Hautlieu from the 11–16 States schools. Unfortunately the Panel's attention tended to be primarily focussed on the publication of exam results, based on a narrow performance indicator, which cannot be said to provide a comprehensive picture of the education system.

It is encouraging that the Panel states in its report that it is not calling for the publication of league tables as it recognises that this would have a damaging effect on schools. This supports the Department's view. The Panel also noted the findings of the House of Commons Children, Families and Schools Select Committee, which called upon the U.K. Government to move away from the use of Achievement and Attainment tables following an enquiry into school accountability in 2009 and 2010.

As part of the Scrutiny review, the Education, Sport and Culture Department furnished the Panel with a significant amount of performance data. It is disappointing that information contained in this data does not appear to have been taken into account by the Panel in reaching its conclusions. The Panel's report would appear to be largely based on the views expressed by one member of the public who does not have a professional background in the field of education, nor a direct knowledge of the Island's education system. It is also worth noting in this connection that the Panel elected not to appoint an independent professional adviser, even though this is normal practice in other Scrutiny reviews.

Findings

| | Findings | Comments |
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| 1 | Exam statistics for each of the Island's schools cannot reasonably be withheld from publication. | The overall performance of our secondary schools is already published and additional information is provided to parents by each school. The current policy is being reviewed, and as part of that work discussions are taking place with the head-teachers of all our secondary schools to ensure there is a uniform approach in the way the information is provided. |
| 2 | There is sufficient independence in the collation of Jersey's exam results data and there is therefore no current need for more direct involvement of the Statistics Unit. | I am pleased that the arrangements for the collation of data have been recognised by the Panel as providing sufficient independence. Jersey's exam data is collated and presented by an independent agency (EPAS). This is operated in the U.K. by the National Federation of Exam Results, acting on behalf of educational authorities across England and Wales. |

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| 3 | The Minister's policy on publishing exam results should ensure that a proper explanation is provided of how Jersey's results may feasibly be compared with other jurisdictions. | <p>To judge all schools solely against academic performance is flawed, as it presumes that all children are equal and all schools are the same.</p> <p>It is fundamentally difficult to compare the performance of individual schools, as our education system is highly selective. The only fair comparison is to consider the overall achievements of our students with those in other jurisdictions.</p> |
| 4 | Exam statistics are not the only performance measure used by the Department of Education, Sport and Culture. | Agreed. It is Department policy not to simply rely on exam statistics, but to use a wide range of performance measures to monitor individual school performance. These include the quality of learning, leadership and management, teaching, and relationships. |
| 5 | There needs to be a proper debate on the structure and objectives of the Island's secondary school system. | The Education, Sport and Culture Consultation Paper on 'Learning for Tomorrow's World: The Future of Education in Jersey' provides opportunities for members of the public to express their views on all areas of education. Following on from this, an appropriate policy option paper will be produced identifying changes to the education system as deemed necessary. |
| 6 | Work should continue on addressing the apparent gender imbalance in school performance and on determining the impact of socio-economic status and parental contribution/influence on performance. | <p>The Department's aim is to ensure that the educational needs of each child are met, regardless of their ability or background.</p> <p>Schools are required to monitor and address all issues which may affect the success of each child. The issue of gender imbalance in school performance is recognised, and reflects similar patterns of results in other jurisdictions, with the variations in performance falling between that which is statistically expected. The Department and schools work together to take appropriate action in addressing this issue, providing support to students in meeting their objectives.</p> <p>School Performance is addressed on a continuous basis by our professional partners.</p> <p>The socio-economic status of each school is taken into account when determining the appropriate allocation of resources (such as SEN and SEBD), and work continues in this area to update and improve information so as to ensure resources are targeted in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.</p> <p>The greatest benefit to a child's development is the engagement of parents in their learning experience, and this is actively encouraged by the Department and schools.</p> |

Recommendations

| | Recommendations | To | Accept/ Reject | Comments | Target date of action/ completion |
|---|--|----|-------------------|--|---|
| 1 | The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture should revise his policy on the publication of exam statistics. | | Accept | A review on the publication of exam results was already being undertaken by the Department prior to the Scrutiny review. This will soon be completed. | August 2011 |
| 2 | The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture should develop a reporting structure for school performance that takes into account other performance measures used by his Department (as well as exam results) and through which information should be made publicly available unless in exceptional circumstances. | | Accept | Over the last couple of years, the Department has been developing a reporting structure that takes into account a wide range of performance measurements. Once this work is completed, additional information on school performance will be made available to the public in the appropriate format. | August 2012 |

Conclusion

The Scrutiny Panel's findings and recommendations for the most part reflect work already being undertaken by the Department, and in this connection I am pleased to note that the Panel has stated in its report that *'we are not calling upon the Minister to publish league tables'*.

Little effort seems to have been made by the Panel to understand the challenges faced by our 11–16 schools, whose performance cannot simply be compared with other Island secondary schools.

Our schools are performing well, and although we can do better, we should not lose sight of the fact that Jersey has a highly selective education system that cannot be compared easily with other jurisdictions. Improvements are being made and the Department is working closely with all partners to ensure that pupils, regardless of their ability, are provided with a good, well-rounded education that meets their needs.

The Panel has been made aware that the Education, Sport and Culture review on the publication of exam results is already in progress. As part of this review, Education, Sport and Culture is considering using other types of data that might add to the public's understanding of our selective system and provide relevant information on a school's performance.

I am pleased that the Panel supports the need for a proper debate on the structure and objectives of the Island's secondary school system. The Education, Sport and Culture Consultation Paper on 'The Future of Education in Jersey' provides the framework for that debate, and I look forward to future discussions on this subject with the Scrutiny Panel, States members, and members of the public.