

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE
BY DEPUTY M.R. HIGGINS OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 9th DECEMBER 2014**

Question

Will the Minister provide members with the following information regarding students who are absent from school without permission, and not related to illness:

- (a) any legislation which applies and the powers of the Department;
- (b) the Department's policy in respect of repeated and extended absences from school;
- (c) the number of staff directly employed in monitoring and dealing with such absence;
- (d) details of any liaison that takes place between the Department, schools, police and social workers in respect of this area;
- (e) a table showing the name of each school, the number of students in each school, and the number of children who have been absent without permission for:
 - (i) one week;
 - (ii) two weeks;
 - (iii) three weeks;
 - (iv) four weeks;
 - (v) four weeks or more;

during the school term from September 2013 to June 2014, together with the percentages of truancy for each school.

Answer

(a) any legislation which applies and the powers of the Department;

Good attendance is recognised as a major factor in a child's success in education so every effort is made by schools and ESC, working with families, to maximize attendance for every student. Unauthorized absence in Jersey is lower than the UK national average.

Under Article 12 of the Education (Jersey) Law 1999 parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that any child of compulsory school age receives a full-time education. The law states:

A parent of a child of compulsory school age shall ensure that the child receives full-time education appropriate to the child's age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs the child may have, either by regular attendance at a school at which the child is a pupil or otherwise.

The law also states that a parent who fails to comply is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.

Under Article 14 the ESC Minister can seek an Education Supervision Order (ESO). This power is delegated to the ESC Attendance Panel, which can also recommend a referral to the Parish Hall with a view to prosecution.

(b) the Department's policy in respect of repeated and extended absences from school;

The aim of the Education Welfare Service (EWS) at Education, Sport and Culture is to prevent any absence from becoming repeated or extended where possible. Prosecution under the law is a last resort. The EWS works in close partnership with schools and families to provide support, advice and guidance to determine the appropriate action needed where concerns emerge regarding a child's attendance. The policy and procedure for dealing with absences is as follows:

Stage 1: School monitoring

Attendance is recorded twice a day in school and reasons for absence are monitored.

Stage 2 & 3: Initial assessments and multi-agency meetings

Where school strategies have been unsuccessful advice is sought from the Education Welfare Officer (EWOs) for primary schools, or Attendance Officers (AOs) in secondary schools.

Contact is made with parents/carers to establish the cause of absence. This often involves home visits to support the family and identify strategies to improve attendance. Where underlying problems exist, an assessment meeting is arranged and where necessary a multi-agency approach is taken to help meet the needs of the child and support the family to enable regular school attendance.

Stage 4: Warning Letter

If there is no significant improvement in attendance, a warning letter is sent by school to remind parents/carers of their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school. If there is still no improvement the Senior Education Welfare Officer (SEWO) will send a formal warning letter.

Stage 5: School Attendance Meeting

Parents/carers are invited to a meeting in school to discuss their child's attendance and to explore ways of working together to improve the situation. An individual Action Plan (IAP) may be drawn up to assist the parents and the pupil in reaching agreed targets. Progress will be reviewed after an agreed period of time

Stage 6: Attendance Panel

If there is no significant improvement in attendance by a certain date the IAP can be reviewed or the case can be referred to an Attendance Panel at ESC. The criteria for referral to a panel include:

- Sporadic attendance below the level expected for the student's age
- Long term record of school refusal
- Where the parent/carer has not cooperated with actions designed to improve attendance
- Where poor punctuality is impacting significantly on school attendance

The panel consists of the Senior Education Welfare Officer, Head of Inclusion or Senior Manager from ESC, external agency manager, school staff and representatives of other departments as required

The parent/carer and child/children, if age appropriate, will be required to attend the Attendance Panel Meeting.

The panel has delegated powers to recommend a referral to the Parish Hall with a view to prosecution. It can also apply to the court for an Education Supervision Order.

(c) the number of staff directly employed in monitoring and dealing with such absence;

Primary schools: Four Education Welfare Officers work with the States primary schools as well as some of the private schools and they monitor and deal with absences as part of their role. One

of the four also supports D'Hautree House School and the Alternative Curriculum. The team is managed by the Senior Education Welfare Officer.

Secondary schools: There is an Attendance Officer in each of the four 11-16 schools.

(d) details of any liaison that takes place between the Department, schools, police and social workers in respect of this area;

The circumstances of each child vary and a range of professionals will be consulted according to the needs of each individual student.

There is daily contact between the department and schools. This can include headteachers, heads of year, special educational needs co-ordinators and teachers who are designated safeguarding leads.

The role of the EWOs and AOs involves a high level of interagency working including liaison with social workers where children have an assigned social worker.

The four EWOs each work with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for a full week on a rota basis. This involves close liaison with all schools, colleges, police and social workers. More recently a community police officer has also been assigned to secondary schools.

(e) a table showing the name of each school, the number of students in each school, and the number of children who have been absent without permission for:

- (i) one week;**
- (ii) two weeks;**
- (iii) three weeks;**
- (iv) four weeks;**
- (v) four weeks or more;**

during the school term from September 2013 to June 2014, together with the percentages of truancy for each school.

Answer

Table 1 below shows attendance and absence (authorised and unauthorised) rates by school in Jersey. Please note that for secondary schools, sessions missed due to 'study leave' (authorised absence) have been removed from all calculations to provide an objective and fair comparison of attendance/absence behaviour; secondary schools in Jersey have different policies regarding the number of sessions that pupils are permitted to spend out of school in preparation for KS4 examinations.

Table 1: Attendance and absence rates by school in Jersey; academic year 2013/2014

	Attendance	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Secondary schools			
Grainville Secondary School	93.6	4.9	1.5
Haute Vallee Secondary School	93.3	4.9	1.8
Les Quennevais Secondary School	93.3	5.3	1.4
Le Rocquier Secondary School	93.9	4.7	1.4
Hautlieu School	95.3	4.6	0.1
Jersey College for Girls	95.5	4.3	0.2
Victoria College	96.4	3.3	0.3

Primary schools			
Bel Royal Primary School	95.4	4.5	0.1
d'Auvergne Primary School	96.2	3.7	0.2
First Tower Primary School	96.2	3.7	0.1
Grands Vaux Primary School	95.3	4.3	0.4
Grouville Primary School	96.2	3.8	0.1
Janvrin Primary School	96.0	3.5	0.5
JCG Preparatory School	97.1	2.6	0.4
La Moye Primary School	96.4	3.2	0.4
Les Landes Primary School	96.4	3.6	0.1
Mont Nicolle Primary School	96.2	3.7	0.1
Plat Douet Primary School	96.1	3.8	0.1
Rouge Bouillon Primary School	94.8	4.7	0.5
Samares Primary School	95.8	3.9	0.3
Springfield Primary School	95.5	4.1	0.4
St Clement's Primary School	96.0	3.9	0.1
St John's Primary School	96.9	3.0	0.0
St Lawrence Primary School	95.9	3.9	0.2
St Luke's Primary School	96.3	3.6	0.2
St Martin's Primary School	96.4	3.6	0.0
St Mary's Primary School	95.5	4.5	0.0
St Peter's Primary School	95.8	4.1	0.1
St Saviour's Primary School	96.1	3.9	0.1
Trinity Primary School	96.3	3.7	0.0
Victoria College Preparatory School	96.7	3.2	0.1

❖ All numbers have been independently rounded to one decimal place

Primary schools

Table 2 shows the number of pupils that were absent from school without permission, during academic year 2013/2014, as well as the average number of pupils on roll throughout the year. Data reflects pupils in years 1 to 6 (reception class is not included because students do not all start at the same time) in Jersey primary schools. In the interests of disclosure control any number less than 10 (including 0) has been denoted by an x.

Please note that unauthorised absence includes;

- Family holidays that were not agreed or were in excess of any prior agreement
- No reason for the absence was provided
- Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)
- Late (more than 30 minutes after registration closed)

Table 2: Average number of pupils on roll and number of pupils that took unauthorised absence during academic year 2013/2014, by primary school in Jersey

	Number of pupils	Between 1 & 2 weeks	Between 2 & 3 weeks	Between 3 & 4 weeks	More than 4 weeks
Bel Royal Primary School	154	x	x	x	x
d'Auvergne Primary School	286	x	x	x	x
First Tower Primary School	293	x	x	x	x
Grands Vaux Primary School	121	x	x	x	x

Grouville Primary School	312	x	x	x	x
Janvrin Primary School	309	10	x	x	x
JCG Preparatory School	285	19	x	x	x
La Moye Primary School	275	18	x	x	x
Les Landes Primary School	143	x	x	x	x
Mont Nicolle Primary School	153	x	x	x	x
Plat Douet Primary School	299	x	x	x	x
Rouge Bouillon Primary School	319	15	x	x	x
Samares Primary School	215	x	x	x	x
Springfield Primary School	153	x	x	x	x
St Clement Primary School	152	x	x	x	x
St John's Primary School	146	x	x	x	x
St Lawrence Primary School	154	x	x	x	x
St Lukes Primary School	155	x	x	x	x
St Martin's Primary School	152	x	x	x	x
St Mary's Primary School	142	x	x	x	x
St Peters Primary School	171	x	x	x	x
St Saviour's Primary School	158	x	x	x	x
Trinity Primary School	155	x	x	x	x
Victoria College Preparatory School	287	x	x	x	x

Secondary schools

Table 3 shows the number of pupils that were absent from school without permission, during academic year 2013/2014, as well as the average number of pupils on roll throughout the year. Data reflects pupils in years 7 to 11 in Jersey secondary schools. Years 12 and 13 are not included because this is not part of compulsory education. In the interests of disclosure control any number less than 10 (including 0) has been denoted by an x.

There are 39 weeks in the school year (187 school days) and 4,118 students in these schools in these year groups.

Table 3: Average number of pupils on roll and number of pupils that took unauthorised absence during academic year 2013/2014, by secondary school in Jersey

	No. of pupils	Between 1 & 2 weeks	Between 2 & 3 weeks	Between 3 & 4 weeks	More than 4 weeks
Grainville Secondary School	542	36	x	x	13
Les Quennevais Secondary School	716	26	x	x	15
Haute Vallee Secondary School	643	38	13	x	26
Le Rocquier Secondary School	883	33	10	x	25
Hautlieu Secondary School	265	x	x	x	x
Jersey College for Girls	525	19	x	x	x
Victoria College	544	x	x	x	x

It is not possible to determine from the data currently held within the department the proportion of sessions missed by pupils due to 'truancy' however a proxy for this measure is the unauthorised absence rate i.e. the percentage of all sessions missed by pupils due to unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised absence includes;

- Family holidays that were not agreed or were in excess of any prior agreement
- No reason for the absence was provided
- Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)
- Late (more than 30 minutes after registration closed)