

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Student Suspension Review Sub-Panel

FRIDAY, 29th JANUARY 2010

Panel:

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier (Chairman)
Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour
Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade
Professor P. Munn (Panel Adviser)
Ms. G. Bunting (Panel Adviser)

Witnesses:

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture
The Head of Victoria College
The Principal of Jersey College for Girls

In attendance:

Ms. S. Power (Scrutiny Officer)

[9:30]

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier (Chairman):

Once again, let me just thank you for coming. It is really appreciated. It seems a long time since Christmas and the last ones. There are just a couple of things I do have to tell you about. For the tape, I will ask you all to introduce yourselves, just for the transcripts. The main thing, other than that, is to point out the statement on the desk. The key part of that is that anything you say is covered by privilege unless you tell us something that you know not to be true which I am sure that is not going to happen. So with that, again, I repeat, thank you for coming. It is really appreciated and thank you, Director, for coming. I will introduce myself. I am Deputy Trevor Pitman. I am Chairman of the School Suspension Sub-Panel, which is a sub-panel of Education and Home Affairs.

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Deputy Jeremy Maçon of St. Saviour.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Deputy Montfort Tadier of St. Brelade.

Professor P. Munn (Panel Adviser):

I am Pamela Munn. I am a Professor of Curriculum Research at the University of Edinburgh and I am here as an adviser to the panel.

Ms. G. Bunting (Panel Adviser):

Gill Bunting, ex teacher from Jersey and a panel adviser.

Ms. S. Power (Scrutiny Officer):

Sam Power, Scrutiny Officer.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

Director of Education, Sport and Culture.

The Head of Victoria College:

Bob Cook, Head of Victoria College.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

Carl Howarth, Principal of Jersey College for Girls.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Thank you. I thought we might start by just saying that in the past, there has been some media coverage which obviously we have got no control over. We hope we are here to do a positive thing. We hope the information you are going to give us will enlighten our efforts to come to some recommendations and conclusions. I just wanted to get that out of the way. We do appreciate you coming and, to begin with, we thought it would be nice to ask you to comment on how you think inclusion is working within your own schools, the positives at the moment. Please feel free to chip in wherever you will.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

As you know, Jersey College for Girls is a selective school so the students have to meet certain academic criteria to get a place at our school. That criteria is a C.A.T. (Cognitive Abilities Test) score of 100 or above and 100 is always set at the national average. It is level 4 in English and Maths or predicted level 4 for the end of year 6 and it is a very positive school report from their primary school. So we take students from all the primary schools on the Island. Obviously, our main feeder school is our Prep. school, which is just across the road from us. We normally take about 40 students from there and another 60 or 70 students from the primary schools on the Island and from the U.K. and from abroad. So we have an average to very bright ability range at J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls) and we cater for those with a very academic programme. It is a very successful programme and our exam results testify to the success of the curriculum that we offer and the quality of teaching that we have. We do have an Educational Needs Co-ordinator who is always very, very busy assessing students to see if they require any access arrangements for examinations. Students seem to do examinations all the time as part of the new examination framework starting in year 10 going right through to year 13 and it is very important that we are aware of the particular needs of those students and how that might impact upon their ability to show their best within an examination. So we have quite a high number of students on access arrangements and that can be from 10 per cent extra time to 25 per cent extra time to 100 per cent extra time. It might also be a language barrier so we have a number of students who are not first language English speaking. We have got a student who requires their first language dictionary to be provided in examinations. We have students who require scribes because they have fine motor skills difficulty. So we have a whole range of students who are provided with access arrangements for school. I would say that the inclusion within the remit of our criteria is working very well for J.C.G. but the criteria is such that we do not have a wide ability range. Within that, though, we do have a significant band of ability with some exceptionally bright students and we cater very well for them too. Does that answer your question?

The Head of Victoria College:

We are very similar to J.C.G. We have a formal examination arrangement for students to get into the school. Our philosophy very much is once students are part of our community, we work very closely with them and their parents to ensure they get maximum benefit from their education. To do that, we have a range of support services which would include maybe counsellors and various methods of

support so that if issues do come up of a social nature or academic nature, we deal with them effectively in-house. So all students feel very much a part of our community and that is how we want them to remain.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

That was short and sweet, well put. I turn to the questions, which you have obviously been advised of the areas in advance. Do your schools use the Education Department suspension policy or do you follow your own?

The Head of Victoria College:

Well, basically, if we did need to use a suspension policy, we would use the one that the guidelines are there for. Suspension is something we do not do very often. In fact, I can probably count on one hand the number in the last 10 years I have found it necessary to suspend. We have other strategies for dealing with it because of the nature of our school and the support mechanisms we have got and the relationship we have with parents. Every school is very different but certainly the guidelines are there and if we needed to suspend, then we would follow those procedures. We have no problem with it.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

What are those other methods, can I ask?

The Head of Victoria College:

Well, the methods we would use is we have a very supportive structure of pastoral care. We have a house system. We have directors of study who work individually with students if necessary. I mentioned before the counsellor we have in who would speak to students who may have problems outside school which are impacting on the school. If there are behavioural issues, again, we have a very structured system which involves all members of staff. It involves the pastoral team, it involves myself. It involves our assistants who are in charge of pastoral. So we try to get mechanisms there where the children feel supported. I suppose what we have done ... we have got the benefit of 157 years, I suppose, to develop this ... is that you get a very strong loyalty system in a school where there is a big house system. I would like to think the vast majority of students are proud to be members of that community and feel loyal to that community. Again, as Carl said earlier, because there is an entrance exam, they have a common criteria. They are there because they want to get benefit from the education facilities we have. I think that is quite a strong motivator.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can I ask you, then, although you say you would be hard pressed to count on one hand the suspensions, does that translate into excluding perhaps young people from entry because you obviously do have that potential?

The Head of Victoria College:

Yes, I have been the Head since 2000 and I have only found it necessary to exclude one student and that was 10 years ago. It is not something that we operate.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

We have our own policy for improving behaviour but that exists within the E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture) policy.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

How does that differ then?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

It does not differ. It simply takes the E.S.C. policy and translates it into the setting of J.C.G. and expands it. We are very much focused on rewards so the ethos of J.C.G. is very much one of learning and personal achievement. Our students want to work hard, they enjoy and value learning at J.C.G., they enjoy being at J.C.G., and they are aspirational. So I would say that the ethos and the quality of relationships that exist between staff and students is the most significant factor in ensuring harmonious and high levels of behaviour at J.C.G.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Can you describe examples of these enhancements that you have made to the policy?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

Yes, we do not have exit rooms. We do not have school detentions because we do not need to, so our behavioural policy fits with the nature of the students that we have and the ethos of the school. It would be bizarre to put something in place that was not required and it probably would detract from the ethos. So very much our focus on improving behaviour is supporting and improving the harmonious relationship that exists within the school. It is a very calm and very happy school to be in. So the sort of things we use are the verbal praise, showing trust, Key Stage 3 students' merits awards, written praise, recording success, academic mentoring. We send home lots of cards and certificates. We have letters home. We phone parents. Our heads of years will send home. We have recognition at year assemblies. Our school is full of work that displays student achievement. We have whole school assemblies which recognise success, both in academic ability but also in personal demeanour. We have a parent briefing which goes out 6 times a year and that is full of what the students have been doing and their achievements. We have electronic notice boards throughout the school and when we hear of a student's success, either in school or out of school, it immediately goes up on the notice board so it is shown to other people. We have a school prize-giving. We have a huge number of prizes that have been donated to the school over its long history and those are given out to students' right throughout the school. We have regular press releases to the media. I think you might have seen the photograph of our students eating their Haiti meal last Tuesday. I have regular meetings with students to praise them and to talk about their success and I must send about 40 letters a week home to individual students commenting on their individual praise.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Sorry to interrupt you but did you say that you have had any suspensions at the school?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I suspended 2 girls last year.

Deputy M. Tadier:

With regard to exclusions?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

No, I have not excluded anybody.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think we are quite impressed by what you have told us. Whether it be house systems or pastoral care systems, I think these are all positives which can certainly lead to a reduction in the need for suspensions. These are obviously things which also exist in the public sector in which there is a higher rate of exclusions. It is fair to say, I think, and perhaps you would agree, that perhaps the underlying reason why you have less suspensions is because you are a selective school and that is something we saw for example, at Hautlieu. We know at Hautlieu, because it can select students, students of a certain band if you like to say of academic performance that they by very nature have those problems. Do you

acknowledge that fact?

The Head of Victoria College:

I think every school is very different. Every school has its own culture. Every school has its own ethos and one works with students and the parent body that one is working with. Now, the challenges that some schools would have, the challenges Carl has, are different to the challenges I have and the expectations are different. I think our job as Heads is to make sure we have the culture right and we have the systems right in our own schools such that we effectively educate the students who are there. It could well be that I was faced with a scenario where, despite all the mechanisms I put in and all the support systems I put in and all the time I spent talking with parents, the students still maybe could not comprehend the expectations we had. Then suspension would be something I would consider but I would hope that all the other mechanisms and all the other structures that Carl has mentioned, which we do as well, would enable us not to do that. But then again my colleagues in every other school have different challenges to what I have and unless you are in that school, you do not know the culture and the way that school operates and the systems. So really it is only possible to talk about the school that we are involved with.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Would a student who had met the C.A.T. score criteria and the other criteria for entry but who perhaps suffered from a behavioural disorder be excluded on that basis?

The Head of Victoria College:

No, we have some students at the college who have issues, behavioural or otherwise, and we have mechanisms to cope with that. Now, maybe the numbers at the college are not what they would be at some other schools, I do not know, but certainly, once a student is accepted into the college - I am sure Carl feels the same - that student is a part of our community and my job ... and that is why the parents are paying fees, is to make sure the education is as effective as possible for that student.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

I think the key thing, in general terms, between fee-paying selective schools and provided non-selective schools is that the fee-paying school is likely to attract a greater degree of parental support, given that they are paying fees and probably less concentration of disaffection, because young people are usually all academically able by virtue of the criteria and want to invest obviously in pursuing an academic route. In the non-fee-paying provided schools, you are likely to get a concentration of young people who are perhaps disaffected because they want an alternative route. They are not necessarily committed to the academic route.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can I just take that point on? Because the parents are paying a fee and quite a substantial fee, does that translate as there is more determination to keep those young people in your schools than perhaps in a State school where they are not paying?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I would say our parents are very, very supportive of the education at J.C.G. and they have chosen for their daughters to go there. They pay fees. The fees are set quite low in comparison with U.K. independent schools and both the Board of Governors and Bob and I work extremely hard to maintain and ensure that the fee is at a level where any student who meets the criteria is not barred from coming to our schools on the basis of finance. Certainly, we have significant budgets put aside to provide financial assistance and so any student who meets the criteria is able to come to J.C.G. irrespective of their ability to pay. The parents have made a very selective and a very determined choice for their daughters to be educated at J.C.G. They expect their daughter to be well behaved. They expect the girls

around their daughter in the school to be well behaved and they expect me to ensure that behaviour in the school is good - which it is, it is the norm - and therefore there is a very high level of parental support but also parental expectation. Parents are highly involved in the education of their daughters and while we may not feel the day to day pressures of significant behavioural issues of our students, we certainly do feel and value the high degree of accountability that our parents provide with regard to the education of their daughters.

[9:45]

The Head of Victoria College:

If the question was asking would I enable a student to remain at the college who was causing a problem just because of the financial incentive to, the answer is: "No." We are very heavily oversubscribed so that is not an issue but I feel very strongly as a Head that it is my job to make sure that a strategy is there which will support the students and allow that student to access education and remain there, and that is why exclusion or suspension is something that personally out of context would be very much the exception rather than something I would use lightly.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I just want to say that our view ... a parental and student view of suspension is that it is a very serious punishment. It is a very serious sanction. It is treated very seriously and I think that there is a level of seriousness results because it is a very rare occurrence as well.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could I ask you, although you have both said it is a great rarity, and obviously we do not want to know about individuals, but what were the reasons that young people were suspended in your own ...

The Head of Victoria College:

I personally would not go into that because it could identify the student but it would be a serious breach of one of our policies that the Governors have approved and that is very rare but if a student did deliberately breach a policy the Governors have there and left me no alternative and I felt that it was detrimental to the other students, that is something that would make me go to the Governors and say: "I think we should consider exclusion."

Deputy M. Tadier:

Mr. Howarth, you said that you had to suspend 2 girls this year?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I did. No, it was last year but, again, I am not going to comment on that specific case because it would clearly identify who the students were. They did something. They appreciated it was wrong. The support mechanisms were put in place. The girls returned to school. They were only off for one day and they have had an unblemished record ever since.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you think that actual suspension or exclusion, even for a day, is a useful thing?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

Absolutely; because it is treated so seriously by parents and students, it enables the student to understand the seriousness of what they have done but it also enables them to review and reflect upon what they have done. It enables them to give some time to have some restorative justice so that the work that was given to these students during their day off enabled them to return to the school and return to their peers with a clean slate.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Could you maybe enlighten us about the provision of work when somebody is off? I think it is one of the questions on the sheet. Obviously a day is different to somebody off for weeks or months.

The Head of Victoria College:

These days things have moved on. We all have virtual learning environments now so even when the snow came down, the students may not have got in, they could access the work with departments. But, again, the way I would use maybe a suspension is if there was a serious issue, I would certainly get the parents in and we would have a very useful conversation about it. I would offer all the other agencies that were at my disposal we employ at the college, and probably the line I would take would be: "Your son cannot afford to lose educational opportunity but I do think maybe for an hour, take him home, talk to him, reason with him, see what the reason was, and let us then get the resolution." I think that is probably the way I would do it, but I think with regard to work, there are so many ways now with email. Students could email staff, staff could email students on a website scenario so work is not maybe the issue it would have been 2 or 3 years ago. I think things have moved on.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I would say that the student's education continues if they are suspended. It continues to be our responsibility to provide a high level of education even if they have been suspended. The process we would go through is I would phone the parents. I would invite the parents in. I would meet with the parents and the student. We would discuss what had happened, the reason why I may be suspending the student and we would discuss what I would like the student to do during the time of suspension so the parents and the student were clear. We would make sure they would have the resources available to it, either through the V.L.E. (Virtual Learning Environment) or, more often than not, the teacher will probably have provided work for that period of time. This is very important: I would also make sure that the student is going to be supervised during that period of suspension, that I have a responsibility to ensure that even though they are at home, there is a care there. They are not being left at home on their own. So we take our duties very, very seriously. We are dedicated professionals. We do care for our students deeply. We want them to achieve. All of us do things from time to time which need correction and it is about the level of care and support you provide during that time that can enable a student to progress and prosper.

The Head of Victoria College:

One thing I would say, I feel very privileged to be head of a school like Jersey College for Girls and I am sure Carl feels the same because we do not have the challenges maybe other schools you read about nationally may have but that does not mean to say we have not got challenges as well. But certainly the opportunities that we can actually experience as heads of schools like ours we do feel very privileged about. That does not say that we do not appreciate some of the challenges that other colleagues do have, and they do have challenges and I think that is something we need to be mindful of. So we are not in a little ivory tower, totally unaware of what the real world is like out there because we have students like every other student but, as we said earlier, we do have a lot of parental support. We do have an academic entry procedure so that provides its own challenges but different challenges to maybe what would arise with suspensions or exclusions.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can I ask is there a different pressure then for yourselves as opposed to the State schools where because you obviously rely a lot on the reputation of the school. As you said, you are a selective school so would that translate as you would keep a student in school perhaps where they would be suspended or excluded otherwise, say it was something like drugs or violence or something serious. Would that extra pressure be on you to keep that within house?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

Not at all; as I said earlier, parents expect me to ensure high levels of behaviour and we work within the tariff as set down in guidance by Education, Sport and Culture and we would work with that. If a student was to do something such as you have described, we would impose a tariff. I do not think we are softer with our students or more lenient with our students. It is simply that it would be a very rare and a very serious occurrence if something like that occurred.

Professor P. Munn:

May I follow up? They were very interesting points you have been making about the importance of the shared culture and ethos in schools and the fact that all schools are different. Of course, research would highlight that. I wonder if you have much contact with head teachers in the provided sector and if there was an opportunity for each of you, as it were, to learn from each other about the issues that you face as heads in these times?

The Head of Victoria College:

In a small island like this, you cannot not be a close colleague with your other head teachers and we meet regularly as a group of head teachers. Many of the agenda items are shared issues like this. I know my colleagues in the 11 to 16 sector well enough that they could pick up the phone and say: "Look, we have an issue here, Bob. How would you deal it?" I would do the same there. There is a relationship like that so certainly we are not in isolation. In a small island, we are very much in touch with each other.

Professor P. Munn:

May I ask another question? You can probably hear I am Scottish so I do not fully understand quite the nuances of relationships here. Can you tell me a little bit about your relationship with the Island schools? Do you get any funding from ...

The Head of Victoria College:

Okay, yes, we are provided schools, unlike De La Salle and Beaulieu, which are private. In our case - I think your case as well, Carl - the States of Jersey own the buildings and we get a 50 per cent grant of what a student would cost to educate in a fully provided school and then the Governors, in consultation with the Education Department and the Finance Minister, set the level of fees but the fees are set at such a level that it would not exclude the majority of people if they wanted that standard of education. As Carl said, we have many bursaries where we support students who cannot afford the fees or in their time at college, circumstances may change such that we felt we needed to keep those students there to fulfil educational requirements. So, yes, we are part of the Island provision.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

The clarification is the word "provided" is used in the Education Law and it is a school provided by the States of Jersey so effectively it is a States school and probably the closest you would get to it in the U.K. is a grant aided school.

Professor P. Munn:

Of course, we do not have them in Scotland. So how many bursaries would you have off the top of your head?

The Head of Victoria College:

I think we have 58 at the moment, which is about 9 per cent of the student population.

Professor P. Munn:

All right, thank you. Would you be the same?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I would not want to give an inaccurate number. I do not have that with me. Bursaries are provided by external trusts that have been set up by people a long time ago on the Island for their daughters or sons to be educated at Victoria College or J.C.G., so students have access to those. We put aside financial assistance for students who are within the school or coming into the school who need that but also the Education Department, I think, provide us with 8 sixth form bursaries a year.

The Head of Victoria College:

Can I just clarify, it is 38 not 58. I do apologise.

Professor P. Munn:

All right, thank you.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can I ask a blunt question? Obviously, it is very impressive what you said about the suspensions. That is to be applauded, so few. How does it work, does it ever happen, where you would, in speaking to parents, say: "Actually, your son/daughter would be better off at another school" so there would be discussions maybe with one of the State schools so a student would leave your schools and end up at one of those. Please, Director, come in if you ...

The Head of Victoria College:

I can speak for Victoria College. That would not happen on behavioural grounds. It may happen if a student clearly was not coping with the curriculum. What we do at Victoria College is we do Key Stage 3 in 2 years to keep motivating the students because it is a selective school. If a student clearly was not achieving, then we say: "Is this academically giving your son the best provision?" because we are moving at a pace but we would try and avoid that. I do have some students at the college who are challenged academically and, again, if we are coming to G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) we would negotiate the G.C.S.E. options but it is possible they can access as much of the curriculum as possible while doing the main statistics. So, for instance, if a boy found a huge problem with doing 3 sciences, we may well say: "Is it in your interests to do sciences other than one when we can concentrate on where your strengths are?" so we would try and find ways around that. But certainly on behavioural grounds, it is not something I would do. I would find strategies to resolve that if possible.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

The structure of the system is such that it would be difficult to do because all admissions to State schools are managed centrally. So it would come through the department and if, for example, there was an issue with behaviour – not that this has happened but if it were to be a case in the future - then that would be picked up by the department. The Educational Psychologist, who would be responsible for that cluster, would then provide the appropriate degree of challenge and support to both the schools.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Director, how would it be picked up if the private conversation has gone on and said: "This is obviously unacceptable." Do you just say that it does not happen?

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, it would be picked up because the Minister would be responsible in law for finding an alternative place at a provided school and the admissions to the private schools or to the provided schools are managed through the department. So a parent does not go from one school to another school and get a

place without the department knowing. The parent can go directly to the school but the admission has to be authorised through the department.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think what we are saying here though - I think what was Trevor was asking and I was going to ask the same question strangely enough - is that we are saying if a head realises that there is an issue, be it behavioural or on educational grounds, I think often these 2 can be linked anyway if you have behavioural issues or the student is having trouble coping maybe because of a condition or otherwise that can manifest also in behaviour terms. It would not necessarily be explicit to the department that they were leaving on those grounds.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

No, it would, because the department would have a conversation with the parent. It would not be explicit, for example, if the parent in the school did not disclose that that was the reason but we have a very clear policy for admissions during the academic year, in other words, out of the normal period of admission. Within that policy, parents would be obviously able to express choices to which school they would go to but we would wish to know the reasons why they are having either second thoughts about the school or they want to make a change. Now, usually, it is quite a straightforward reason. If you have got a transfer between one school and another school, it is usually because the parents have moved location often from this side of the Island to that side of the Island and it is more convenient to go to that school. But, for example, if a parent was to say: "I want to move my child from this school because my child is being bullied," then someone at the department would be required to look into that. The parents would be encouraged to work with the school that the child is already in rather than transfer.

Deputy M. Tadier:

With due respect, what we are saying here is that a parent who does not tell you necessarily if a negotiation has taken place between a teacher from that school and the parent and it is agreed that it is best to leave, that would never come to the light of the department, especially if it is not in term time.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

I could not say that it is 100 per cent secure. I would say it is well over 99 per cent secure because the fact is that we do have these discussions with parents. It would be very rare, I would think, for a parent, if they wanted their child to be successful in a new school, not to give a clear reason as to why they are moving. Now, if it is simply preference and the parent says: "Well, I just want to move" or: "It is because I can no longer afford the fees" well, obviously, in those circumstances, we would not know the true reasons.

[10:00]

The Head of Victoria College:

I do not know whether Carl has this in the girls' school, but there may be a scenario where a boy does not like an all-male environment and parents may say: "My son would be better off in a mixed school." Well, I would pick up the phone to maybe one of my colleague heads and say: "I have a scenario here. Will you meet the parents?" But that does not happen. It has not happened for goodness knows, probably 9 years, I do not know, but I would have a conversation with the other school and say: "There is an issue here which is not an issue which is a problem to me but it may be to the student. How do we deal with it?" It may be we do not deal with it. Quite often, the student may want a say, which is fantastic, but it may be that environments are different for different students.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

There is also an expectation from the receiving school that all the records would be transferred to the

receiving school before the child would be admitted and that would be hopefully achieved within one week.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I think it is very important for the panel to understand that the level of support of parents at J.C.G. is very, very high. So if there was any sort of concern or issue, that would be discussed over a long period of time and strategies would be put in place to resolve difficulties that a student may be having. You may get to a point where the parent themselves decides that their daughter would move to another school but that is generally because of the opportunities to transfer within the current educational structure so 14 plus, 16 plus are times where students may go. We have a very fluid student population in terms of we have many people moving to the Island and they access the school because they are moving to the Island or they are leaving because their job is moving elsewhere so the students will go. So students come in and out quite regularly but not for the reasons that you have been describing. But I would say that in terms of the student movement, we have a net gain each year. More students move into the school than out.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Mr. Cook, I think the point we are trying to dance around is that effectively in the past I think it is fair to say that your schools have always had a good reputation and I think when anything untoward has happened ... it has been perhaps in the past, before your time, a tradition to deal with things in-house for the reputation of the school which is understandable, but would you say that culture is now gone?

The Head of Victoria College:

It is not a culture I would want to follow through. We are very open. We use loads of services and certainly if there is anything we can do to get support from outside, we would do. I do not run a school where I am not happy to involve agencies, to be open and be frank and I think that is why we are oversubscribed because parents openly value the openness, the, hopefully, honesty. I may not be doing a good job. Maybe I am under an illusion but I like to think of Victoria College as a nice place to be and that we are an open community with not just the Education Department but with the Island.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

I think what you are alluding to is there a concern about informal exclusions and I think there is a cultural dimension to this which is very different from the U.K. I know that over the period of time, for example, the first 3 years that league tables were introduced in the U.K. that suspensions tripled and there were significant concerns about informal suspensions because of the pressures that were put on schools by league tables and because of the pressures that were put on schools around the admission of students. So if you take the U.K. context where anybody in the boroughs around can apply for a place at a school, you open up the door to the school being able to select even though it may not be a selective school. Now, you do not have that context in Jersey. You do not have the publication of league tables. You do not have the pressure on the schools. You still have the accountability but you do not have the public pressure on the schools that would create a need for schools to informally lose students.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

That is an issue we were talking about a lot yesterday. If league tables were be introduced, would that put added pressure on schools?

The Head of Victoria College:

It would not bother me in the least. I think that league tables are something that is not a priority. League tables can be manipulated by the media. They frequently are. League tables can be prioritised with loads of different criteria. League tables are something that, if they were here, I would still run the school the same as I run it now. I certainly would not change it or change any way I operate. So facing

the league tables, it is something that is not significant.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I think you have got to be careful of artificially polarising the schools on the Island. I am not interested in league tables. I am interested in the education of the girls at J.C.G.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

The point is the experience and practice in the U.K. has shown us quite clearly that league tables put undue pressure on certain schools. They do not compare like with like and they lead to unintended consequences and sometimes practices such as informal exclusions that are not desirable.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Obviously there are different ways, as we have said, that league tables ... looking at value added would be completely different just looking at A to C grades.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

Value added is an important aspect. Value added is something that we use in all our performance criteria with schools. However, it is not refined to the point where it gets over some of those particular hurdles with league tables and it is not necessary - from an educational perspective this is - I believe, in an Island that is 9 by 5 where you are closely engaged with every school and know the level of performance. That said, parents of those schools are provided with full information about the performance of schools. It is not difficult to create a league table in Jersey and bear in mind that league tables are not created by the government of the U.K. League tables are created by the media. It is not difficult to create a league table in Jersey but it would not be desirable and I would suggest that it would put undue pressure on an education system that is already performing.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

It would not be educationally valuable for me to look at a league table in Jersey. Last year, we had a value added of one, which puts us within the top 4 per cent of schools across the U.K. Value added one is equivalent to a whole grade higher than what they would have predicted to have got through their C.A.T.s classes. Very, very high value added is something which we consider a personal achievement. We do use the U.K. league tables to benchmark against schools of similar types. You will not find a similar type of school in Jersey like J.C.G. and therefore it makes a nonsense of a league table. We would look to have a benchmarking exercise with a school in the U.K.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I know Deputy Maçon wants to come in, but I just point out for the record we are not advocating school league tables. We are being devil's advocate really.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Just to tidy up this section before I forget. I think, Director, I agree with most of what you said and it crystallised our thought about informal exclusions and what you said about league tables in the U.K. was also correct but I think in Jersey while we do not have league tables, nonetheless we do every year have the results of the G.S.C.E. or A levels and that is something which each school is very proud of. So I think, in effect, there is almost a kind of league table because parents and the schools themselves are very protective about these results.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely; it is not high stakes which is the important thing. I know this is not entirely at the crux of the matter you are trying to get to but the fact of the matter is that we believe that some of the measures that we are putting in place at the moment and developing in relation to holding schools to account for

their performance, and for the public to hold the system to account, are ahead of the game as far as the U.K. is concerned because we lost things like S.A.T.s (Standardised Assessment Tests) quite a few years ago. The U.K. look poised to lose them without a replacement and what we are looking at now are not just standards but pupil progress so really it is irrespective of what standard a child has reached when they enter school. Are they making appropriate progress from that point onwards and that is a key part of looking at the success of schools.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Just to refer back to what was being said earlier. Would it be accurate to say that in part the success of your students is due to the values that the parents have towards education and behaviour?

The Head of Victoria College:

Not 100 per cent. Some parents have different perceptions of what education is and what the provision should be. I am very, very fortunate, as I said earlier, that the vast majority of parents and students are with us because they want the sort of education we offer which does not appeal to everybody. We are not a comprehensive school and we do not pretend to be a comprehensive school. But I would say that once parents buy into the system, I think you are right in saying that in the main, they have a similar desire for an outcome that we would have ourselves.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I would say, Jeremy, that the success of our students is based upon high levels of parental support, high levels of aspiration, 98 per cent of our students go off to university, a high work ethic and they are just very, very happy to be at the school that they are at.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What percentage goes to university?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I think it is 98 per cent.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What I am saying though, obviously people who come in at an early stage, it is not 98 per cent of entrants who go to university. There would be people who have dropped out along the way.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

Very rarely; the figure I quoted is year 13.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Of particular concern to us during the way the review has unfolded has been young people with Asperger's/Autistic Spectrum Disorder. We were really impressed with seeing the communications unit at Grainville yesterday. It just took me back to a comment from one of the head teachers from one of the State schools. He felt that young people who were suspended were better off with State schools and I think he meant because there was better provision to help such young people. Obviously, you are both very proud of your schools but how do you deal with those young people who have difficulties with Asperger's or the likes?

The Head of Victoria College:

It depends where on the spectrum it is, I would say. Certainly, we do not have some of the mechanisms and some of the structures that other schools have because we do not get the funding in the same way. It would be wrong if a student was not accessing the curriculum to say: "Well, stay at Victoria College for the sake of it." But likewise I would not say: "If you can access the curriculum, go elsewhere." That is

not the way we would operate. But, again, parents need to say: “Well, are you giving the provision we would want?” Because if a student needs a huge amount of extra support and we have not got the structures there, then really the student is going to be frustrated and the parents are going to be frustrated and so would the college. So, again, it depends on individual cases but we do have children who have various levels of Asperger’s, certainly various levels of dyslexia, and other learning needs and we deal with those as effectively as we can.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I would suggest that the Asperger’s/autistic spectrum is very, very wide and you can have exceptionally gifted people who have Asperger’s Syndrome who thrive on and devour a highly academic curriculum, particularly in maths and science or arts and/or music and therefore we look to provide a curriculum which will meet the needs of that particular student.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Just on the question about diagnosis, do you find that when you do have students with autism and dyslexia that they come to you pre-diagnosed or do you find yourselves diagnosing children when perhaps they reach year 8, year 9?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

It varies. I will start with dyslexia. It varies. We have students who arrive with us with very good records and it has been observed, it has been assessed and been diagnosed and individual learning plans are in place which are very useful to us to support our teachers and our head of years for that particular student. We also assess students as well. Our Educational Needs Co-ordinator is qualified to provide in-house assessments and she does so and that then will lead on to providing the range of support for that particular student and the access arrangements I was talking about earlier.

The Head of Victoria College:

Probably the majority of work we would do there is to try and get an extra time for support for external examinations but we do have people come in who work and assess the students. But if a child was diagnosed before that child came to us as having something that was going to be a special learning need, that would not stop us necessarily saying: “Sorry, you can access education here.” Where I would be concerned is if it was at a degree that we did not have the facilities for that individual child but that is not something that is a major significant issue.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

One piece of information which the panel might wish to be aware of, as you know we have an inclusion review on at the moment and that is due to report by March. We have had an interim report and one of the findings so far is that there is a very high degree of diagnosis in relation to Asperger’s and autism in Jersey compared to the U.K.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

When was that review commissioned?

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture:

That review was commissioned almost ... by March, it will be about a year ago.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

But I was specifically interested in the later detection rates, year 8, year 9. How do you find that? Happens often? Happens in a few cases?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

Generally it can come through ... more often than not it will come through a particular teacher concern. A teacher or a number of teachers will have noticed a particular aspect of a student's work or the way a student is learning or the difficulty they are encountering and they will then form a case study meeting chaired by the head of year and the E.N.C.O (Educational Needs Co-ordinator). That might lead into a decision to meet with the parents and a recommendation for a reading test, a spelling test or a dyslexia assessment. That would be done in house. If it was diagnosed as dyslexia then support would be put in place. Yes, those detection rates are taking place right through the school and they can come up through teacher concern, parental concern or even student concern.

[10:15]

The Head of Victoria College:

I do not think it is just that children have special requirements, I think it is generally, in a boys' or a girls' school, they learn differently. I happened to come across an article last week about the way boys learn in Sydney, which was very interesting so I showed it to my members of staff, because that is something to look at, boys like moving. You know, so if you are going to have boys, like, sit there it is not going to good for everybody. So again you are looking at what is out there to support the whole community not just small parts of the community.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What level of co-operation is there between the 2 schools to pool resources? You spoke earlier about access arrangement.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

When I talk about access arrangements, what I am referring to is students accessing external examinations. So they may need 25 per cent extra time, they may need a scribe, they may need a prompter or they may need 100 per cent extra. That is what I am referring to as access arrangements. Victoria College and J.C.G. collaborate extensively at an enrichment level. The 2 schools produced a wonderful musical 2 years ago, Les Misérables. We are looking to do a similar thing this year. The curriculum is also one where students collaborate. For example, we do not do economics, Victoria College do. So girls who wish to do economic as part of their A Level syllabus can access it at Victoria College. Spanish has a fairly small cohort of students studying it and so we do one year at Victoria College, one year at J.C.G. Music, again, is a very small cohort of students so we split the teaching of the A Level across the 2 schools.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Does that extend to the states schools like Hautlieu? Do you share sometimes subjects with Hautlieu?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

We do not have any students accessing Hautlieu at the moment.

Deputy M. Tadier:

The reason I ask is I remember when I was at Hautlieu certainly we used to have students from J.C.G. and Victoria College come.

The Head of Victoria College:

I think 2 or 3 years ago we did a bit of physics for Hautlieu because there was a problem there with teaching or something, I cannot remember. But, yes, if it came to that that would be something we would support.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is something which extends to special needs there. If there was someone with Asperger's, let us say, and there were not provisions necessarily or it was not a viable to teach them with just one provision in your school ...

The Head of Victoria College:

I think we would talk and see what provision was required.

Deputy M. Tadier:

There is a flexibility there?

The Head of Victoria College:

We are only across the road, a tunnel connects us.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Well, I was going to move on to the next question, if that is okay. Why do you think that some schools in the Island have greater numbers of suspensions than others?

The Head of Victoria College:

It is difficult for us to answer that one, because we are not in that context. Each school is very different. The governing bodies and the head teachers obviously know their clientele and how they want to work there. So really unless you are in that individual situation or have been to that school on a regular basis, it is difficult to know the context. So really, to be honest with you, we can only talk about our own schools, I think.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I would say it would be very odd if each school had the same number of suspensions, to be quite frank. Having said that, as I said before, I think it would be very wrong to artificially polarise the schools. I would suggest that it is the head teacher that decided that the behaviour of an individual student warranted a suspension in their particular school. We are working with individuals who bring with them a variety of needs. Head teachers are very dedicated professionals and they carefully select a strategy that would be most effective in bringing about a positive improvement for that student. I think heads make the decision based upon their knowledge of that particular student.

Deputy M. Tadier:

We all know that exclusion is often a last resort. It is not something that anyone particularly likes to use. What mechanisms are there along the way to flag up the type of behaviour which could potentially end in suspensions and how would you, as headmasters, head teachers, be kept informed of that?

The Head of Victoria College:

I do not really think on a behavioural issue that I would be in a position where I would need to exclude, because I think that we would have solved the problems along the way. There is always the unpredictable where as you mentioned earlier drugs and alcohol policies where we have very clear guidelines. If somebody deliberately broke one of those policies, it may force me into a position where I have to invoke that policy. I would say to the Board of Governors: "Is this acceptable? You decide." Then they would deal with the E.S.C. Department. But I cannot think of a scenario where on the disciplinary route I would be unable to resolve it at Victoria College in that context.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

It is very rare of me to speak to a student about their misbehaviour. But if we were to do a type of scaled response it would be the teacher would first of all speak with a student about their misbehaviour and reinforce the appropriateness and expectations of what they were asking for. If that was not

resolved at that level then the head of department, for example the Head of English, would then speak with the student. Again, if that was not resolved at that level there would be discussion with the Head of Year, certainly a phone if not a letter to the parents. There would then be a meeting with the parents. We would put a stage report card system in. We would meet again with the parents. If it had not been resolved by then a member of the senior leadership team, probably my vice-principal, would form a case study to review the history of what had happened so far and the strategies that had been put in place. We would look to see if the involvement of the school councillor or an educational psychologist or, if appropriate, referral to C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) would be required. Then if it had not been resolved by then they would meet with me. But, as I say, the vast majority of incidences would have been resolved far before it gets to me.

The Head of Victoria College:

I think as well the important thing is the communication that we would have and the knowledge I have got of my parent body that I would be very surprised if they were not singing the same tune as we are singing. I think it is that collaboration, that co-operation, that communication, which is very important and which we are fortunate to experience.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

To take on from that point, I think one of our previous interviews, I think it might have been the Director who highlighted the fact, if there has been one failing maybe with education it is perhaps that they have not liaised enough with parents.

The Director for Education Sport and Culture:

I would not say that we have not liaised enough with parents, I would say the issue for the department would be around providing greater clarity of advice for head teachers. It is fine when your head teachers have been in post for a number of years and implicitly know the processes and the expectations. But the gap really was for new head teachers coming in understanding what the policies and the processes were, which was the rationale for developing the new guidance. So that a new head teacher coming in knows exactly what the expectations are as far as the department is concerned and can follow the processes that have been set out, so that there is consistency across the schools. That is really where the weakness has been.

The Head of Victoria College:

I think what is important as well, I know a barrier I came across very early in my headship at Victoria College, was parents did not feel that they could come in at any time and say: "I have an issue." That, I think, is a barrier that we have now broken down and parents feel they can communicate. They can email any member of staff at any time. My contact number is available 24 hours a day so parents can pick up the phone if there is an issue and we can resolve it there and then. I think that is important. Parents feel they can come and talk to you and you are going to find a solution to their problem. Really, a lot of the problems just disappear on the way. That is really valuable.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Do you think it is fair to say that by nature of the schools being selective that you are both in a quite blessed position really? You are probably not having to face some of these issues that the States schools are facing?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I think that being a head is probably the best job in the world. It is also a very tough job too. The pressures on being the Head of J.C.G. are very high parental and student expectations. Therefore you are always looking to improve the quality of the teaching and learning, the quality of the educational experience that my students have on a day to day basis. Those are the pressures which we feel very,

very keenly, but we accept it as our prime responsibility. It is what we are there to do.

The Head of Victoria College:

As I said earlier, I feel privileged to be head of school like this because the challenges are different. We do not face some of the challenges that many schools in the United Kingdom or elsewhere face.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I have to say, as someone who works in education, you paint an idyllic picture almost. I still find it really hard to believe that you hardly ever have to speak to the young people about their behaviour. Young people are young people.

The Head of Victoria College:

I will be honest with you, I cannot really remember the last time I had to raise my voice. Now that helps my sanity and my blood pressure, but it also a nice position to be in that you can speak to people and they will respond to you. That helps our job.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But, as you said, they are picked up presumably at a different level by teachers in the classroom and at the grassroots.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

We had a whole school parental survey done in July and the approval of the school in terms of parents valuing the school and recommending it to others was at 97 per cent. It is a very happy school. I would invite the panel to come and visit J.C.G. and experience it. I know Jeremy was there last year for the Home Affairs but I do not know if anyone else has visited J.C.G. Just come and meet the students and see the school that we are talking about.

The Director for Education Sport and Culture:

I think there is a real wealth of research that tells you that the success comes out of the partnership between the students, the school and the parents. I think what you are seeing is backing that up in a sense. Obviously the expectations of parents and pupils in both schools are similar in that they want their children to succeed. But I think you are likely to see a different style of partnership in a school where virtually every parent will make sure there is a representative at a parents' evening against the school where the school struggles to get parents to attend the parents' evening in the first place. So it is the strength of the partnership that makes the difference. The school cannot do it alone and the parents cannot do it alone.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Probably an unfair question, but what advice would you give your colleagues in the States schools to try and improve their situations, which are not their own doing?

The Head of Victoria College:

I do not think that we can give advice. If I was going into a new school now I would very quickly learn my market and find out what the strategies were to support that market. I think that is what we did very quickly at Victoria College and you probably did at J.C.G. Again if I went to a school, you would have to very, very, very quickly assess the strategies you would need. I am sure each of my colleagues have done that in the 11-16 schools. It is identifying your market and finding the strategies to support that group of the community which is critical.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What do you mean by market?

The Head of Victoria College:

The people who are coming to your college or your school, my clients, I suppose in modern business speak we would say, the students and families.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I guess you are a fee paying school so it fair to view it as a market.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I would not even try to begin to give my colleagues advice. They are the experts in their particular schools and I think it would be highly arrogant of me and patronising really to do that. I am not the head of their particular school. They are the dedicated professional expert, they are the head teacher. They are doing the job that they wish to do.

Deputy M. Tadier:

More generally, do you feel that you have enough ... you have already said that you have a very close working relationship between the colleges, but does that extend to the States schools? Would you meet with the other head teachers?

The Head of Victoria College:

Well, we do.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

Yes, we have a Secondary Head Teachers' meeting. The agenda is about sharing practice, looking at all the policies. There may not be initiatives that are directly relevant to either Bob or myself, but it is very, very important that we are aware of the various things that are going on and we have a corporate view. J.C.G. is part of E.S.C. and we play a corporate part in that.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Just to harp back, so I have it clear, did you say that while you have been there, there have been no exclusions whatsoever?

The Head of Victoria College:

I have had one.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

One.

The Head of Victoria College:

That was 9 and a half years ago.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

And for yourself?

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I have had none.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

How long have you been head teacher?

The Head of Victoria College:

I am retiring this year. So I have done 9 years and 6 months, so it will be 10 years by the time I go.

The Principal of Jersey College for Girls:

I have been in post since September 2008.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could I thank you for both for coming along. It has been useful for us. Thank you, Director.

[10:28]