

Dear Deputy Bryans,

We are writing to you as the parents of two girls who currently attend Beaulieu Primary School.

The reason for contacting you is to seek clarification on the proposals to cut funding to the four fee paying schools, currently being debated in the States of Jersey.

Your proposals, as set out in yesterday's JEP, are causing families a significant amount of stress, as well as concerns that this will lead to further cuts in the future, in spite of your assurances that this will not be the case - GST increases being the obvious comparison. This year parents have already been forced to absorb Beaulieu fee increases of 3.5% and we have been advised by the school that they will have to pass on the costs to parents should the proposals be approved. It is difficult to understand why the Department would choose to jeopardize the existing £20 million in savings to the States as a result of almost 40% of the Island's school children being educated at fee paying schools. Your comparison to fee paying schools in the UK is completely off the mark given this statistic and the inadequate number of State schools to educate the Island's children. The increasing unaffordability of the fees and the negative publicity generated by your proposals will only discourage parents from sending their children to the schools in the future and ultimately counterproductive.

In addition, you will be aware that there is already a significant fee differential between Beaulieu and JCG given that the States fee paying schools receive substantially more funding than the private fee paying schools, as well as the recent discontinuation of support for capital funding for Beaulieu.

By way of further background, last year parents were asked to make a contribution to Beaulieu's Campus Foundation Development to support the phased development of the Campus which requires much needed refurbishment and renewal, in particular to the Middle School. Before deciding to contribute to the appeal, we wanted to gain a better understanding of the current funding arrangements, as it appeared that the school was under constant financial pressure. To be frank, it now just feels that the efforts of this funding campaign maybe undermined should your proposals receive approval in the States, as parents will struggle to make these voluntary contributions, as well as covering the further fee increases.

We appreciate that in the past Beaulieu has benefited from capital grants from the States of Jersey, however having requested sight of the financial statements of the school, it appears that in recent years additional funds to support capital projects have been advanced to the school by way of loans from the States. Furthermore, and what is very difficult to comprehend, is the application of penal interest rates to these loans - currently 4% p.a. and previously 6% p.a - rates which may not look out of place in the commercial world, but are a completely inappropriate charge in the case of a non-profit organisation. The interest payments should be immediately suspended and the savings redirected to the Campus Development.

We cannot understand the logic of the current inequitable funding system and how it can be a sustainable model for the future of the estimated 18% of the school population educated through the non-maintained schools. Your proposals do not address this issue. You will be aware of the significant contribution that Beaulieu School has made to the Island, namely:

- * The gifting of the school to the Island in 2001;
- * The education of over 750 pupils on an inclusive basis, including pupils unable to gain entry to the State's fee paying schools;
- * The active partnership with the Department and its SEN program, in particular the development of the Learning Centre.

Given this background and the concerns being raised by parents, we would also appreciate your response to the following points:

* What steps will the Department consider to address the inequitable disparity in the funding arrangements as set out above?

* In the case of Beaulieu School - will the Department consider the immediate suspension of the interest payments on the States' loans, as well as the deferral of any further loan repayments until a sustainable model is agreed?

* If your proposals receive approval, has the Department, when calculating any potential savings, taken into account those parents who will seek to transfer children to Sates non-fee paying schools due to the unaffordability revised fees?

* What contingency plans has the Department put in place to accommodate the transfer of the pupils mentioned in the previous point?

We are hopeful that the recent article in the JEP detailing the comments of the Chief Minister regarding the Island's positive financial outlook, may lead the States to reject your proposals.

We look forward to your response in due course, as we understand the Beaulieu Parent Consultative Committee are convening an emergency meeting to address concerns being raised by parents.

Your sincerely,

Roddy and Alison Horgan