

23.03.21

3 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Children and Education regarding complaints of former pupils of St. James' school (OQ.52/2023)

Will the Minister advise whether she is aware of any complaints from former pupils of St. James School claiming that they were physically assaulted by staff members and, if she is, will she advise what action she is planning to take; and if she is not aware of any such complaints, will she undertake to consider the matter and to report back to the Assembly?

Deputy I. Gardiner (The Minister for Children and Education):

I thank the Deputy for his question because it took me time to look at what happened; I needed to go back to the history. So I am aware that the Jersey Redress Scheme which closed applications in August 2020 received a small number of enquiries about whether alleged abuse or harm at St. James would fall under the terms of the scheme but it did not fall under the terms of the scheme and it was Inquiries. So in the event that I will receive complaints, because personally I am not aware about the complaints, I would seek appropriate advice and discuss this further with the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers first.

3.3.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I welcome that response, in particular the acknowledgement that this is not something that will simply need to be addressed potentially by her department but by the Chief Minister's as well. I will simply, I suppose, ask whether she will ... she seems to have acknowledged the fact that the Redress Scheme did not cover St. James because it was not technically a care setting but does she accept that many of those who were at St. James were not in an ordinary school and they were there because they had more complex educational and emotional needs and that they seem to have been, on the face of it, let down by the Government of the day with the provision that they ... and experiences they went through?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

The Deputy is correct. The Jersey Redress Scheme was set up to provide redress to people who as children suffered abuse and harm while resident in the Government of Jersey children's homes and the Government of Jersey's foster care placement or while accommodated at Les Chênes secure residential unit. The scheme criteria did not extend to schools and therefore children who attended at St. James were not part of the redress scheme that was previously decided by the Government. If complaints will come forward, I will take and I will discuss with the Council of Ministers.

3.3.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Would the Minister consider looking through the Care of Children in Jersey Review Panel report that was produced in 2021? One of the recommendations was to review historic cases, or legacy cases, and their outcomes and it does strike me that this may be an opportunity to do that. So can I point the Minister to that report and ask her to consider some of the recommendations that were produced in those reports?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I will commit to review the report and look back at the recommendations.

3.3.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

I welcome the openness from the Minister to receive complaints from former pupils of the school. Is there a mechanism which she would prefer for those members of the public, what I would call survivors, or perhaps their representatives, to contact the Minister? If she is unable to do that now, would she perhaps consider liaising with me afterwards to provide a method of preferred contact, bearing in mind some of the individuals may not wish to contact the department directly or personally.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I welcome to engage with the Deputy at my email address now, so yes.