

**4.1 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding G.C.S.E. results:**

What statistical information, if any, does the Minister have to support the statement on page 11 of the Council of Ministers' Strategic Priorities document that "the Island has been overtaken" in G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) results by England?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans of St. Helier (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):**

There are many different ways to analyse data and statistics and G.C.S.E. results are a notorious example of this. Members may have heard or read or seen the difficulties that the U.K. (United Kingdom) has got into recently by changing some of their results. The answer to Deputy Tadier's question depends on which measure you choose to look at. So, for instance, if we take - it is a little bit abstract and a little bit difficult but I can provide further information should Members want it - if we take the percentage of the G.C.S.E.s that are an A\* to C grade, Jersey has been consistently above England over a decade. However, a more useful message is the percentage of students who got 5 or more passes at grade A\* to C. This is what opens the door to employment or further study.

[09:45]

Jersey's performance in this has remained consistent for over a decade. Until 2009 we were ahead of England but results there have been improving and in 2010 we were overtaken for the first time. England scored 75.4 per cent compared to Jersey's 69.8 per cent. An even more important G.C.S.E. measure is for 5 A\* to Cs including English and Maths. Jersey scored higher in this until 2011 when England edged ahead to 59.0 per cent compared to our 58.2 per cent. G.C.S.E. comparisons must come with a major health warning, particular this year and next year. It is an increasingly complicated landscape and there has been a huge upheaval in G.C.S.E.s, not just the contents of the qualifications but also the way figures are calculated. The one certainty is that there is room to improve Jersey's G.C.S.E. results and that is what myself, the department and the director have been working on. We want to return to a position where we are above the U.K. however you look at it.

**The Bailiff:**

Minister, answers must be brief, the usual rule is one minute and 30 seconds.

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

Thank you, Sir, I will get to the point. Results at the moment are being finalised by the Education Statistics Team; they came out Friday in the U.K. and we are still counting. They will be published next month in line with the timetable for our new publications schedule, which mirrors what happens with results of information in the U.K.

**4.1.1 Deputy M. Tadier:**

It is clear that obviously the statistics can be interpreted in different ways, depending which test one uses but it is clearly the statement of the Minister's which says that the Island has been overtaken, not anyone else, so presumably that is the test that they have taken. I suppose the immediate question is what steps is the Minister and the department taking specifically when it comes to English and Maths skills to make sure that those subject areas are actually enhanced and students are performing to the best of their capabilities in those 2 areas in particular?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

We have embarked on ... I think the 4 principles have been outlined by the director but I will just repeat those. One is that we are looking at standards, the other is looking at curriculum, then autonomy and finally family. The top 3 are the most important ones and, in fact, the top 2 are the ones that directly relate to the G.C.S.E. results. In that we have been working on what they call

‘task and finish groups’ that will be finished in mid-February. That is working with heads and teachers on strategic plans to improve the results that we have.

**4.1.2 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:**

As part of his methods to improve standards, does the Minister accept that the Coalition Government’s emphasis currently on testing, for example testing for phonics at 6 and testing the 12 times table at 11, does not in and of itself improve educational standards, it merely puts people through a hoop?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

I think in principle I do agree with that. I think I would rather have students in schools learning than become examination fodder.

**4.1.3 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:**

Is there any evidence to suggest that children who come from families where English is the second language are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to G.C.S.E. English O level results?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

No, I am not aware of anything that does suggest that.

**4.1.4. Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

The Minister said that he was not aware of that, but has he spoken to the head teachers of the primary and secondary schools to try and establish any evidence of that?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

I have been visiting all primary schools, over the last month or so I visited 25, I think, educational establishments and I have not had discussions on that particular aspect. I am aware of the numbers of E.A.L. (English as an additional language) students but I can come back to the Deputy should she require any further information.

**4.1.5 Deputy J.A. Hilton**

The Minister just admitted that he had not asked that particular question, so I would ask that he does go back and speak to the headteachers specifically about English as a second language.

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

Specifically to do with?

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

Whether children who come from families where English is a second language are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to G.C.S.E. results.

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

It is my belief they are not in the discussions I have had but I can certainly further that discussion.

**4.1.6 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:**

In the very good answer the Minister gave to the first part of the question, he said since 2009 A\* to C have passed above England in G.S.C.E. but since 2011 A\* to C in English and Maths has fallen. Why is it only now in 2015 we are being told this? Will the Minister undertake to stop spinning these results and give us them as they are so we can deal with them?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

I do not believe that we have been spinning the results. We have been quite honest; we publish all the statistical results. In fact one of the commitments that we have made in this administration is to make sure that the parents, the students and members of the public are fully aware of the

commitment both by our department and by the results themselves. So within the next week, as we look through the results that have been received by this department, we will see full statistics published.

**4.1.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Is the Minister aware that the figures shown on his website, the Education Department website, show that in 2013 figures and 2014 figures Jersey is back on top and that we are 5 per cent ahead of England?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

No, I am not aware of that. I will have a look and get back to the Deputy, thank you.

**4.1.8 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I hope that when students do finally leave school their English is of a sufficient standard to understand some of the jargon that we heard from the Minister. When I asked the question about what we could specifically do to raise standards in English and Maths, he talked about autonomy and about raising standards. One of the ways we raise standards is by raising standards, it answers itself. I would like specifically to know whether the Minister agrees, especially when it comes to maths tuition, whether the way to improve maths output - whether it be at primary or secondary school - ultimately is to employ primary school teachers who are specifically expert in maths rather than necessarily all-rounders. That is one way that can effectively be used, which will of course have a resource implication to raise the standard ultimately for school leavers.

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

No, I do not agree that we look for teachers who are specifically tutored in maths. Our view from an education situation is that we take a holistic view on the well-being of the child, both educationally and in their background with regard to family. So I think that the teachers we have currently are doing a remarkable job and I will not be opening myself that maths teachers are the way to go.

**4.1.9 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Would that rule of thumb apply to secondary schools equally? Would we expect to see maths teachers at a secondary school level who are not proficient necessarily or expert in maths?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

There is consideration given in that particular area for because of the need for them to move into an examination phase, but as I say on a holistic view we would not do that.