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Jersey secondary education

Response by the Policy Centre Jersey to Scrutiny Panel

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Introduction

The Children, Education and Home Affairs Panel of the States Assembly is currently conducting a review of secondary education funding. The relevant website page states –

The review's main objective is to establish the requirements of the secondary education system in Jersey and assess whether the funding for secondary education is sufficient to meet these requirements. The review will consider how the funding is impacted by other contextual factors, including:

- Student wellbeing,
- Teacher and school staff remuneration, recruitment and retention,
- The 14+ secondary transfer system, and
- Public expectations of what secondary schools should provide.

The review will also aim to analyse the outcomes of the secondary education system and explore the potential link between these



outcomes (for example student qualifications) and the funding allocated to secondary schools.

This response by the Policy Centre Jersey aims to assist the Panel in its work by analysing the last two of the contextual factors, although widening the first to cover the secondary school structure generally. The Centre does not have a corporate view, but instead seeks to contribute more effective policy-making through rigorous research and promoting informed discussion.

The response builds on earlier work by the Policy Centre in respect to one of its priority areas, social mobility. Its report [Social Mobility in Jersey](#) covers all aspects of social mobility including the school system and university-education on-Island.

This response is limited because of the absence of official statistics on the performance of Jersey's schools individually and collectively, which itself should be a public policy issue.

Summary

- The future prosperity of the Island and of its young people in particular depends critically on the quality of the education that they receive.
- Jersey has an unusual secondary school structure; there is a high degree of selection and the absence of schools offering free education for the entire secondary school age range.
- The available evidence suggests that selective systems do not produce the best results.
- There is no rationale for selection at 14; it is damaging to the schools who lose those students and to the students who remain.
- There is a stated aim "to build an education system that is comparable to, or better than, other high performing jurisdictions". However, there are no arrangements to assess how effective Jersey is in achieving this aim.
- Throughout England, education authorities and academy chains comprehensively analyse how their schools are doing in relation to comparable schools, not only in aggregate but broken down by subject and characteristics of students. Performance data on each school is published annually.
- Jersey's practice is to make very limited evaluation of the performance of its schools and to publish very little on attainment levels.
- In 2023, at GCSE level Jersey's performance was slightly above that of schools in England as a whole. At A level performance was below the average of all English schools. Jersey's performance is significantly below that of high performing areas in England.

- The 2020 [Independent School Funding Review](#) concluded that “Jersey non-fee-paying schools [are] underperforming relative to England” and “non-fee-paying and fee-paying state-maintained schools in Jersey add less value to their pupils’ performance than the equivalent schools in England”.
- The reports under the Jersey Schools Review Framework are thin in respect of attainment and to the extent that comparisons are made they take no account at the different starting points of students. Schools that select on the basis of ability, such as the colleges and Hautlieu, are bound to have better GCSE and A level results than schools that do not select, particularly when those schools lose some of their most able students to Hautlieu.
- If there is concern about educational attainment levels and equality of opportunity in Jersey it would be appropriate to –
 - Take steps to ensure that there are meaningful value added figures for each secondary school so that performance of the schools can be compared with each other and with schools in comparable jurisdictions.
 - Review the policy of selection at 14.
 - Evaluate the option of each of the four 11-16 schools having a sixth form.

Assumptions

In drafting this response three assumptions are made -

- The future prosperity of the Island and of its young people in particular depends critically on the quality of the education that they receive. Accordingly, government should seek to ensure that Jersey’s education system produces outstanding results.
- Social mobility is generally accepted to be desirable, therefore public policy should seek to reduce the impact of disadvantage, particularly in early years.
- Where there is a stated government policy this should be evidence-based and implemented through actions linked to the objective.

Secondary schools in Jersey

Table 1 sets out key data for the Island’s secondary schools, excluding special schools. Unfortunately, detailed figures are not available.

Table 1 Jersey secondary schools, status and number of pupils

School	Status	Year 7 (11+)	Year 10 (14+)	Year 12 (16+)	Total
De La Salle	State supported private 3-18				
Beaulieu Convent	State supported private 3-18				
St Michael's	Private 3-14	150	0	0	150
Victoria College	State fee paying 11-18			100?	684
Jersey College for Girls	State fee paying 11-18			100?	719
Les Quennevais	State 11-16			0	862
Haute Vallée	State 11-16			0	633
Grainville	State 11-16	180?	150?	0	713
Le Rocquier	State 11-16			0	732
Hautlieu	State 14-18		180?	650?	837
Highlands	State 16+			606	606
Total					6,200

Note: There are no published statistics for the various age groups. The total figures are taken from the Jersey Schools Performance Framework. Some broad estimates have been made for some of the other figures. The Highlands figure is taken from a Freedom of Information (Fol) response.

The table shows four main categories of secondary schools –

- Two private schools supported by Government grants - De La Salle and Beaulieu. Both are catholic schools but accept other pupils.
- One private school, St Michael's, which covers the 11-14 age range.
- The two colleges, state fee-paying schools.
- Hautlieu, a state school covering the 14-18 age range.
- Four state schools covering the 11-16 age range, but with a loss of pupils to Hautlieu at 14.
- Highlands College, which covers the 16+ age range.

Although the two colleges and the two catholic schools have different constitutional arrangements the practical effect is similar in that Government grants reduce the fees payable. Table 2 shows current fee levels

Table 2 Jersey secondary schools, fee levels

School	Fees per term
De La Salle	£2,680
Beaulieu Convent	£2,905
St Michael's	£2,226
Victoria College	£2,504
Jersey College for Girls	£2,768
Four state secondary schools	0
Memorandum item	
Average private school fee in England	£5,300

It can be argued that the Jersey Government is subsidising private education. Equally it can be argued that given that educational outcomes are no higher in Jersey than in England parents of students at fee-paying schools are subsidising state education. This is a huge subject that is beyond the scope of this paper.

Selection

Jersey is unusual in having a structure that is highly selective –

- At age 11 the colleges take a significant proportion of the highest attaining students.
- At age 14 a proportion of students, generally the more able, transfer from the state schools to Hautlieu. In 2023, 36 students transferred from Grainville, 30 from Le Rocquier, 18 from Haute Vallée and 10 from Les Quennevais.
- At age 16 the remaining students at the four state schools transfer to Hautlieu or Highlands or drop out of the school system. The school leaving age in Jersey is 16; in most jurisdictions it is 18.

Students do not have the ability to have a free state education from 11 to 18 at the same school. For some, this means a disrupted education. Arguably, the system is also less attractive to teachers and makes it more difficult for state schools to play a full role in their communities.

The available evidence is that the best performing education systems are those with the least selection. For example, the [PISA 2022 Results](#) report includes the following analysis -

Delaying the age at selection into different education programmes

Early tracking is negatively associated with socio-economic fairness, and is related to the concentration of advantaged/disadvantaged students in schools.

PISA 2022 results consistently show that in systems where students are selected into different curricular programmes at an earlier age, there is a stronger association between students' socio-economic profile and their performance (Table II.B1.4.31).

The earlier students are selected into different academic programmes, the greater the isolation of advantaged and disadvantaged students in the education system (Figures II.4.16 and II.4.17). The measures of concentration of advantaged and disadvantaged students in schools gauge the opportunities for social interaction between different groups of students in a school. This is important because classmates and schoolmates can have a strong influence on one another (i.e. peer effects) – for better and for worse. They can motivate each other and help each other overcome learning difficulties; but they can also disrupt instruction, require disproportionate attention from teachers, and be a source of anxiety.

PISA results show that early tracking, the concentration of advantaged and disadvantaged students in schools, and socio-economic fairness in mathematics are related. Although PISA data cannot determine how they are related, they provide insights into some aspects that countries may wish to consider as they aim to provide learning opportunities for all students. It may be worth exploring whether the undesirable consequences of early tracking can be mitigated by: keeping the concentration of advantaged and disadvantaged students in schools at reasonable levels and minimising its impact on student learning; removing the social stigma associated with certain tracks; implementing challenging and rich curricula in all programmes and ensuring they are adequately supported and resourced; introducing flexibility into the system so that students can transfer easily between programmes; and offering pathways to higher education to all students.

This issue was covered in the [Independent Review of Inclusive Education and early years](#), published in 2021 -

The review team have identified that the prevailing approach to education in Jersey is currently based on separating provision so that it aligns to the needs of different groups of children and young people. Whilst this approach is arguably underpinned by good intentions, it can be a structural barrier to achieving inclusive education.

There is no clear evidence-based rationale for the unusual and unique selection at the age of 14. Students who move to Hautlieu are initially disrupted, and interestingly some return immediately to their original school. There is no measure of how others may feel that stay at the school.

Do they all perform better in this environment rather than continuing at a school they have been at for probably three years? The morale of teachers and the wellbeing of students who “failed” to get in is a known impact. This possibly harms the outcomes at the originating schools. This is particularly impactful at Grainville, Haute Vallée and Le Rocquier which supply a large number of the intake to Hautlieu.

Measuring attainment levels

The Government website states -

Our ambition is to continue to build an education system that is comparable to, or better than, other high performing jurisdictions.

Given this objective, Jersey should naturally be assessing the performance of its schools against those in “other high performing jurisdictions”. An Fol request asked which jurisdictions had been identified as “high performing”, what metrics were used to measure how Jersey compared and what assessment had been made of performance. The response on 16 July 2024 stated –

The information requested is publicly available on www.gov.je therefore Article 23 of the Freedom of Information (Jersey) Law 2011 has been applied.

The Jersey School Review Handbook was written at the time influenced by systems used in other jurisdictions as explained in the introductory sections of the handbook.

Individual school’s achievements are compared to English data and performance across Jersey. See pages 37 to 43.

Please see the below link:

[Jersey Schools Review Framework \(gov.je\)](http://www.gov.je)

This response does not answer any of the questions. The Framework does not indicate that any “high performing jurisdictions” had been looked at but rather states that “The Handbook was produced after an extensive consultation process, involving a wide range of professionals from Jersey”. The Handbook states that evaluation of schools will include comparison of individual school data with data from Jersey and (where available) England. One of the criteria for “outstanding” is “Between key stages, the proportions of pupils in different groups achieving expectations in English and mathematics is above those for Jersey”. It is clear that the ambition to continue “to build an education system that is comparable to, or better than, other high performing jurisdictions” is not matched by any attempt to compare Jersey with “high performing jurisdictions”.

Throughout England, education authorities and academy chains do detailed analyses of how their schools are doing in relation to comparable schools, not only in aggregate but broken down by subject and variables such as children entitled to the pupil premium. This is not done to apportion blame but rather to identify strengths and weaknesses, so that plans can be made to improve performance. This is similar to the practice adopted by any good business and by education authorities throughout the world.

In England comprehensive statistics are published for every school on a Government [website](#). This [table](#) shows the figures for Hertfordshire. The key statistic is “progress 8”. Simply defined, this is a measure of value added. It compares performance with predicted performance based on the starting point. Clearly a school that selects pupils based on ability, such as the colleges and Hautlieu, will have better headline GCSE results than a school which does not select at age 11 and has lost some of its highest attaining pupils at age 14.

The table shows in respect to Progress 8, that 43 schools were “above average”, 17 were “average” and 10 were “below average”. The table concludes with averages for all Hertfordshire schools, all English schools and all English state funded schools. For London, a single website page [GCSE results by borough](#) has detailed statistics for each London borough. In 2022/23 Ealing was the highest performing borough and Havering the lowest performing.

The only analyses of individual schools in Jersey are in the reports from the [Jersey Schools Review Framework](#), in effect the Jersey equivalent of Ofsted. Detailed statistics for individual schools and for Jersey as a whole, comparable to the data for all English educational authorities, are not published and quite possibly not calculated.

The review reports are high level and have few if any statistics on performance. The following are relevant comments about attainment in the most recent reports –

Jersey College for Girls

Outcomes at GCSE and A level are impressive and show improvement in recent years.

Victoria College

Headline published data show that overall outcomes are consistently high. Pupils’ attainment in Year 7 and Year 9 is markedly above other schools. By the time they get to GCSE, they outperform Jersey averages and UK equivalents on almost all measures, often by some way.

Beaulieu

Pupils' GCSE attainment at the end of Year 11 is higher than the UK and island average. The school is to be commended for having an inclusive sixth form provision which flexibly offers students places on a wider range of A level courses by working in partnership with other local schools. However, A level grades are slightly below the Jersey average. Senior leaders agree that too few pupils with high prior attainment achieve the highest grades possible at both GCSE and A Level.

Hautlieu

- Examination results across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4, compare favourably with those in other Jersey schools. A very small number of subjects have recently dipped in their achievement.
- Overall performance at the end of Key Stage 5 is consistently strong.

Grainville

Overall measures of progress across students' five years at the school point to many achieving outcomes broadly in line with expectations based on their achievement and their potential at the end of Year 6.

Haute Vallée

Results at GCSE, and the progress pupils make towards their examination grades, are strong across most subjects, given the pupils' starting points.

Le Rocquier

- Across almost all subjects, the Year 11 cohort of 2022 achieved soundly from their starting points and left the school with pleasing results. This enabled them to move on to relevant courses with post 16 providers, almost all at A Level or equivalent.
- Nevertheless, in those GCSEs, boys did not do as well as girls, nor as well as boys in other Jersey 11-16 schools in several subjects.

Les Quennevais

Headline published data for 2023 show that pupils' progress over their time at the school is particularly strong. As a consequence, Le Quennevais outperformed Jersey averages for 11-16 schools across almost all attainment measures and compares favourably with English equivalents.

The following points are worth noting –

- The colleges and Hautlieu outperform other Jersey schools, which is not surprising given that they are selective.
- There is no indication of what the “equivalents”, in respect of the colleges, are, and no indication of the extent of the “outperformance”.

- “Les Quennevais outperformed Jersey averages for 11-16 schools”, which means it outperformed Le Rocquier, Haute Vallée and Grainville, all of which performed well. This statement is seriously misleading. It has already been noted that in 2023, 36 students transferred to Hautlieu from Grainville, 30 from Le Rocquier, 18 from Haute Vallée and 10 from Les Quennevais. The lower number transferring from Les Quennevais at least partly, and possibly wholly, explains this “outperformance”. It would be a simple exercise to correct for this.

It is appropriate here to note a comment in the 2014 report [Equality in the Jersey Education System](#) by the Jersey Community Relations Trust –

There is a real concern that the lack of independent data on school performance may have contributed to the presence of a reputational stigma attaching to some non-fee-paying secondary schools as regards standards of behaviour and academic achievement. This stigma could have a negative impact on the wellbeing of these pupils. Equally worryingly, this stigma may have permeated the labour market thereby affecting the opportunities that the pupils of these schools may enjoy later on in life. To ensure that pupils and parents can exercise effective choice in school selection and to remove any unwarranted stigma affecting some schools the States should publish independent performance data on each school.

Comparative data

Every August headline figures are published by the Jersey Government for exam results, but generally in a way that can best be described as spinning. The first line of the Government press release on the 2023 GCSE results was triumphant: “Students in Jersey have celebrated their GCSE results, achieving overall results that are better than their English counterparts”. 24.7% of Jersey students achieved the three highest grades compared with 21.6% of English students. But in London the proportion was 28.4% and in Hertfordshire, an area with broadly similar characteristics to Jersey, it was 28.9%.

For A level results the press release was less triumphant: “Students in Jersey have today received their A level results, achieving a comparable pass rate to students in England”. 24.5% of all A levels taken by Jersey students were at A* and A, compared to 26.5% in England. For A*-C passes, Jersey students achieved 73.9% compared to 75.4%. So for A* and A the Jersey figure was 7.5% below the England figure and for A*-C it was 2% below. Figures are published for the English regions for the A*-A performance. Jersey’s 24.5% compares with 30.0% in London, 26.9% in the South East and 26.3% in the South West. One small London borough, Richmond, achieved a figure of 36%.

The most recent Government report analysing the Jersey statistics in any detail, [GCSE and equivalent results](#), is for 2018/19 and is largely confined to setting out statistics for the whole island. It has just one brief high-level table comparing Jersey with England as a whole.

There is a [page](#) on the Government website showing GCSE and A level results for Jersey and England as a whole but this stops at 2020.

The only comparative data on school performance is from the [Independent School Funding Review](#), published in 2020. Among the points it made were:

- Comparing Jersey non-fee-paying schools with their like-for-like equivalents in England shows Jersey non-fee-paying schools underperforming relative to England.
- Further, when you examine “value add” metrics such as Progress 8, non-fee-paying and fee-paying state-maintained schools in Jersey add less value to their pupils’ performance than the equivalent schools in England, while the state-maintained fee-paying schools add significantly above average value – on average adding half a grade per subject to each pupil.
- Comparing the percentage of pupils who left KS4 and went on to take a Level 3 qualification (A-Level or equivalent), Jersey is found to also perform less well than the UK. In 2016, 61.4% of pupils went on to Level 3 study, including pupils who studied for AS levels, compared to 71.2% of pupils in the UK.

The attitude towards comparing Jersey performance with UK performance is illustrated in an FoI response on primary school performance: “comparisons are not made with the UK as different measures are used so there is no relevant comparison”.

Issues for consideration

If there is concern about educational attainment levels and equality of opportunity in Jersey it would be appropriate to –

1. Take steps to ensure that there are meaningful value added figures for each secondary school so that performance of the schools can be compared with each other and with schools in comparable jurisdictions. This would avoid the sort of absurd comment about the performance of Hautlieu: “Examination results across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4, compare favourably with those in other Jersey schools.” Given that Hautlieu has taken, by a selection process, some of the most able students from the other schools it would be astonishing if this was not the case. The introduction to the Jersey Schools

Performance Framework states: “We aim to build an education system that is comparable to, or better than, other high performing jurisdictions.” This cannot be done unless the high performing jurisdictions are identified and comparable data exists.

2. It is difficult, if not impossible, to see the justification for selection at age 14. The policy needs to be reviewed.
3. The option of each of the four 11-16 schools having a sixth form should be evaluated. The case is clearly strongest for Les Quennevais, because of both its size and location. None of those schools could offer the full range of A level subjects, but as is already the case schools can co-operate to provide the necessary range.

Appendix

A note on PISA

At international level the OECD operates the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which measures 15-year olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges. Over 80 countries are covered. The most recent report, covering data for 2022, shows, for example, the UK in 13th place for reading and science and 11th for mathematics. England scores significantly higher than Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales for mathematics and science and (with the exception of Scotland) reading. Internationally, Singapore scored significantly higher than all other countries/economies. Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Macao, Taipei, Ireland, Estonia and Canada also feature prominently. The education systems in Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Macao and the United Kingdom are considered to be highly equitable, combining high levels of inclusion and fairness.

The comprehensive results of each PISA review contain a wealth of analysis relevant to any jurisdiction. The [PISA 2022 Results](#) includes a chapter "from data to insights", which identified three areas that jurisdictions could usefully pursue.

- Examine why student performance declined so sharply between the 2018 and 2022 studies.
- Provide all students with opportunities to fulfil their potential regardless of their backgrounds, and tailor policies to education systems' particular contexts.
- Study resilient systems where learning, equity and well-being were maintained and promoted despite pandemic-related disruptions.

The UK Government has published [PISA 2022: National Report for England](#), which analyses in detail the figures for England and includes comparisons between the nations of the UK.