

2025.03.18

### **4.3 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning regarding teachers leaving Jersey (OQ.73/2025):**

Further to recent reports that teachers are leaving Jersey, and in light of the pay award accepted by teachers in 2024, what explanation can the Minister provide for why teaching staff are resigning and leaving the Island?

#### **Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central (The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning):**

I thank the Deputy for her question. There are 2 elements to the answer I will give. One is a statistical one, which is always interesting. The rates of leaving teaching, there were 935 employed teachers on 31st January this year; 44 teachers are recorded as leaving the Island, which is a 4.9 per cent rate lower than the Government rate of 7.1 per cent. That includes teachers retiring, that includes teachers leaving the state sectors to go to private schools, so remaining in teaching, and teachers leaving the Island. However, for me, a statistical answer is lovely but I would also say I have always had concerns about why it is teachers might be leaving the profession and what we can do in order to keep teachers in the profession. That is a relatively low rate but we want to make sure that that is as low as possible. There are lots of other demands made on teachers as to reasons why they may be leaving the profession itself.

#### **4.3.1 Deputy K.M. Wilson:**

Could he give us a bit more assessment or his own assessment of what those reasons might be and does he think that pay may well be a factor in that scenario?

#### **Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, I was going to do that and I thought it might be going on too long. There are a number of reasons why teachers may leave. First of all, it is a really tough job. Second, the cost of living in Jersey affects all sectors of our economy. Finding housing for your family might be very difficult. There may also be a change of career because the job is just something you do not want to do anymore. Sorry, I did not get the second part of the question, which was? Pay. I was pleased to say that a 3-year pay deal had been made but there are other elements as well that we need to look at. When I came to office in this role I was extremely disappointed that a letter had been sent to all teaching staff effectively dividing them into individuals and asked them to accept a pay deal or a letter, which is Elon Musk style, saying if you do not reply then it is seen as an acceptance. I would not put my name to a letter like that and very quickly we settled the pay deal. In addition to that, for the first time ever, we are looking at how, not if, we will increase time for teachers in schools to prepare, plan and assess. I think the workload is also one of the largest elements of why teachers are leaving the profession. We are working as quickly as possible on that with the trade unions, where we have a much better relationship.

#### **4.3.2 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:**

The Minister wisely and correctly cites one of the possible reasons for teachers leaving is likely housing and cost-of-living issues. Would he agree that it might be useful in order to gain statistics on and doing a questionnaire for departing teachers and the reasons why they are doing it so that those of us that are concerned with those issues can prove it? I will come back with a supplementary.

#### **Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, I think what the Deputy is referring to is exit interviews, and exit interviews have been an issue that I have brought up so many times and my Assistant Minister certainly has brought them up. I do not think we have that entirely right yet. There are exit interviews but if somebody is leaving the Island it can be slightly challenging, so it might be done online. I think the numbers are relatively small. That does not mean complacency and we must never be complacent with any workforce. Because the numbers are relatively small, it should not be too difficult to find out why. Housing, cost of living, the job itself, changes in people's lives is another issue, and flexibility in workforce. We are doing some

work on that, particularly for women returning to the workforce, which I think we can improve, and there are some good ideas that we have coming forward.

#### **4.3.3 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:**

Having been civilly partnered to a teacher that was coming to Jersey - unfortunately they did not come - I am very well aware of the issues of terms and conditions and cost of living that teachers have because I live in a teacher's world. My twin is one as well. I wonder if the Minister would also confirm in this important question whether the terms and conditions review, that I understood that was going on, is going to be resolved. I hear different stories about the terms and conditions review. It was promised, it was not going to be done, it has been done but not satisfactorily. He is a unionist, will he publicly say he is content with the terms and conditions review, when is it going to be done and when a teacher is going to get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work?

#### **Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I am a trade unionist, I am not sure if I am a unionist but there we go. I agree, yes, the terms and conditions work has been undertaken. Has the outcome of that terms and conditions work been exactly what everyone has wanted? The answer is no and we are in a position where what we need to do is find a way forward. What I want to do is to look at a way in which we can start that process of providing more P.P.A. (planning, preparation and assessment) - just remembered what it was - time, particularly in our primary schools. We are looking at some work, for example, that had happened in Guernsey that they have done very well. We went and shared some ideas. They are looking at things that we are doing, so that we can provide for that and in secondary schools.

The money for that is difficult to find but I want to do that certainly by January. It will not be perfect but I think we can find a ground where trust is restored in our relationship with trade unions and trust is restored that we do want to improve the lot of the teaching profession, and then we can move forward. I hope that that is the case. That will be supported in this Assembly in any Government Plan, and I look forward to that happening.

#### **4.3.4 Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central:**

Two of the recommendations from the C.E.H.A. (Children, Education and Home Affairs) Panel's secondary education funding review, which had an impact on improving the teacher experience, one was to increase non-contact time, which the Minister has mentioned, the other was to reassess the budget for continuous professional development. Can the Minister explain what progress has been made in these areas?

#### **Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Absolutely, and that is one of the keys. One of the biggest obstacles to C.P.D. (continuing professional development) is finding the time to release teachers to do it. Some of the work we are doing with providing, if you like, a system whereby we have available teachers all year that can be booked by headteachers means that that can be planned more effectively. Therefore the money spent in C.P.D. can be guaranteed to be used in the correct way. Once we have done that we can look at where is the best spend and where the actual need is for continuing professional development because some of that is sharing good practice across our schools. We have very, very good teachers on this Island who want to share practice. Sometimes there are obstacles simply of time to get together and share that practice. There are a number of little things that we can do in order to enable that to begin with before we look further at the budget itself. But yes, these are all things that are on the agenda in the coming weeks and months.

#### **4.3.5 Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Could the Minister give an idea of the time when these changes may be completed?

#### **Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Extra money would need to be in the Government Plan for January. However, we are looking at pace to see what we can get instigated by September, particularly with some of the work that we, as I have said, shared with other jurisdictions. It seems to be working really well. It is a very simple solution to

some of the problems themselves. I would say my ambition, as ever, is to do this as quickly as possible and have something in place, even if it is pilot schemes for schools to show does this work, does this work effectively, is it improving the lot, if you like, of teachers in September, and then have something more general in place from January so we know we are spending the money well and it is effectively used. That is the only timescale I can give at this moment.

#### **4.3.6 Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South:**

Just to ask the Minister, following up on these terms and conditions, it has been pointed out to me that it was in March 2024 that he said he was going to deliver on terms and conditions in September 2024. Just to remind him that the previous Government had said that they were actually going to deliver the terms and conditions in March 2024. I am slightly concerned. Here we are in - what are we - March 2025 and we still have no delivery on terms and conditions. Can the Minister explain why there has been such a delay?

#### **Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Well I did not inherit any action to be taken on terms and conditions so that was not going to happen in March 2024. The terms and condition change we are talking about require money and require a settlement of a pay dispute. What I inherited was a pay dispute that was ongoing. That was settled first before we could get on to talk about terms and conditions. Terms and conditions are being looked at continuously.

[10:15]

Those negotiations are going on and we are coming to, I think, some agreements, certainly with headteachers and with other teaching professions, to look at a way in which we can - and I mention again - for the first time ever, look at increasing time for teachers to teach and prepare, looking at how we can continue to increase that time and use it effectively. Yes, I would like to see that happen as quickly as possible. The cost of that is significant, I recognise that. But I think the argument around that is accepted and the quicker we move forward that, yes, my answer to the Deputy would have been we would have loved to have done it at that time. I do not think that was in place. We had a pay dispute when I took over.

#### **4.3.7 Deputy D.J. Warr:**

I am concerned, the Minister makes a promise in March to the Assembly for delivery in September. I am still struggling to understand why make the promise in March and then fail to deliver in September and now making excuses so much further down the track as reasons for delay. Maybe you should not be making promises in the first place.

#### **Deputy R.J. Ward:**

It is clear from the approach that is taken there as to why it was so difficult for the unions to negotiate in the first place. What we are trying to do is get a reality, a sustainable approach to future time for teachers. We have a settled pay dispute for 3 years that did not exist. Instead, what I would call almost illegal letters were sent out, a letter which I would not put my signature to. What I wanted to happen was exactly that. If those things do not happen in that timescale, it does not mean we are not working at them. It does not mean I do not feel disappointed that it has not happened, but we are working incredibly hard to get these things in place. It is challenging. Of course it is challenging. It is not just about P.P.A. time, it is about other things such as looking at the whole arena - it is the best word I could think of - of education itself and seeing how we can work better across our schools. There have been other things as well that have been prioritised that we have taken on board I think that have helped in schools as well.

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

Yes we have some more questions but remind Members this is a question about why teachers are resigning and leaving the Island, and we should not stray too far from that.

#### **4.5.8 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:**

Without wishing to sound like we are sticking to a line of questioning, the Minister did in his original answer refer to the impact of workload upon teachers and although he has his perspective, which he has laid out to the Assembly, other views and recollections are quite different to what was set out. Contrary to popular opinion, it is possible to carry on 2 different sets of work at the same time. Terms and conditions was the part of work, the workstream, that would actually deal with workload of teachers. It was on track for March 2024 to be delivered, so will the Minister please look forward and tell the Assembly when it will be delivered because the change of Government has done nothing but stalled the progress that is having the greatest level of impact upon teachers.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I simply do not accept that interpretation of where we are and the interpretation that by March 2024 dealing with all of the terms and conditions outcomes was available. It simply was not. We were still in dispute. Teachers were being told: “You either accept the pay deal or you will be paid separately”, which would have been the worst possible scenario to enter into terms and conditions talks. What we have done so far is enter into those effectively, look for ways in which we can move forward and to have a much better relationship with the trade unions so there is a realism as to what we can do. As I mentioned earlier, what I would like to see is as soon as possible, even if it pilots in September, because we are looking with money that we have got now to look at ways in which the extended P.P.A. time can be used effectively in as many schools as possible so that we can introduce things in January. That will have a cost. I will have to take that to a Government Plan, and I am certain from what is said today a number of Members will support that if it comes in the Government Plan. I look forward to that support, but I will say that we have a healthy relationship with trade unions now. We have a healthy relationship with the teaching profession when they know they are respected particularly by myself, my Deputy and other members of the department. We have 2 members of schools which are now working with C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) 2 days a week, so we have a much better link with what is happening in schools and understanding what is happening in schools. So there are a number of pieces of work that are underneath the surface. Terms and conditions are not one isolated thing. It could be things like unified timetables. It could be about 20 tasks which staff are asked to do and can be things about the way we use I.T. (information technology) more effectively. I would completely agree with the Deputy if she wants to ask a question about I.T. that has not worked; no, it has not. Absolutely agree and we have worked really hard on that, so there are a number of things, as I said, but we are working as quickly as we can.

**4.3.9 Deputy K.L. Moore:**

It appears that money and funding is the issue. Could the Deputy explain why this Council of Ministers will not support their Minister and deliver the funding that is required to deliver the change in terms and conditions?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

As a previous Chief Minister and Council Minister, I am sure the Deputy understands the funding process for the Government Plan takes place in advance, so as we develop more things and you want more money, you have to go on another bid. That is exactly what we will do. I hope that support will be there. If that support is there, we will act as quickly as we can. If not, we will act as quickly as we can in January and use our money as creatively as possible to get things in place for teachers, but that is a real key difference. What I am looking to do is do that for teachers. I am not looking for conflict with this profession. I am not looking to downgrade them. I am not looking to say to them: “You are creating problems for us.” I am saying: “Let us work together”, and that is trying to get the best possible workforce that we can.

**4.3.10 Deputy R.S. Kovacs of St. Saviour:**

As the Minister stated that one of the reasons that poses challenges on retaining teachers is the cost of living, what is he doing to work together with his Ministerial colleagues in adopting policies to alleviate that?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

It is quite a wide question. I would support a number of things. I would support the removal of G.S.T. (goods and services tax) from food. I would support rent regulation. I would support the sort of things that are coming through on housing. I would support the removal of the social security cap so there is more money available. Those are all things I would support which have not been supported in this Assembly by other Members; Deputy Kovacs aside. There are a number of things I would support as we move forward. In terms of education remit, all I can work with is ensuring that the pay rise is there and it is there with 1 per cent above inflation for the next 3 years, I believe - I might have got that wrong - that we are doing everything we can to try and improve terms and conditions as quickly as we possibly can. Not perfectly, but we are moving forward in that, and I think there is a growing trust there which is really important. I think as well, one other element I would say is I am keen that we stop using education as a political football. That would help a great deal and keep people in the profession because they do not feel that they are being blamed for every ill of society.

#### **4.3.11 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:**

I would like to ask the Minister if one of the other reasons for teachers leaving the profession and leaving the Island - if he considers it - is instability? The C.Y.P.E.S. Department will have the third interim chief officer within 3 years, 4 years, and now we do not have director of Education. Does the Minister consider that we do need the role of director of Education in Jersey?

#### **Deputy R.J. Ward:**

There is an interim person in that role who I think is working his socks off. I would suggest that there is a huge void between teachers standing in front of classes in a classroom wondering about the size of their mortgage or their rent or how they are paying things with their family and who is the person at the top of C.Y.P.E.S. One of the actions that has been taken to try and close that gap is to second 2 headteachers 2 days a week to make that link and do some work, which is happening rapidly, and we will be reporting back very, very soon - I have already seen some of the work they have started - so that there is a greater understanding between schools and C.Y.P.E.S.; schools understand what C.Y.P.E.S. as a department does and C.Y.P.E.S. understand what schools do. That interaction, I think, will really help to move those 2 areas forward and get the support where it is needed. I cannot say how I would make the link between changes to directors and staff leaving school. If the Deputy has that link, I would be very interested to know.

#### **4.3.12 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

If my understanding is correct, the interim is for the Children, Young People and Skills. We do have a head of Skills. We do have a chief social worker for Children's Services, and we currently do not have the head of Education which education for me - and I would like to check with the Minister for him - is much beyond school. We do have college. We have University Jersey. We do have apprentice trainings. We do have early years, and it is about a sustainable way or constant way going forward. This would probably be the director of Education that can go through the terms, deliver the political terms. Does the Minister think that the job of director for Education or any other form leading education in Jersey is required, or it can be substituted by 2 headteachers 2 days a week?

#### **Deputy R.J. Ward:**

First of all, the 2 headteachers are not a substitution for that. They are a completely different role to increase understanding. I have never been a believer in large layers of management, particularly in schools. I think we have a profession of very, very qualified people that we should allow to do their jobs. The interim role takes on both children and education. That is absolutely correct. There are other members of the department who are stepping up and taking on roles, and I think what we want is an effective and smooth way in which we understand what is happening in schools, give schools the responsibilities where they have the skills, and I think the restructure that we can undertake will exactly do that. I do not believe that simply more layers of management does anything other than create more layers of management.

#### **4.3.13 Deputy K.M. Wilson:**

Thank you to the Minister for his answers. Does he believe that people taking on other roles is really an act of desperation to keep the show on the road and does he accept that the quicker he develops terms and conditions and a resolution to the terms and conditions and cost of living will reverse the position that we currently find ourselves in and can he assure parents that he is doing all he can to bring that to a conclusion?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

First of all, I do not accept the language “desperation”. Everything is such an attack on education at the moment. It is such a shame that we get this in the Assembly so much. Second, as I mentioned at the beginning of this, the rates of teachers leaving is relatively low, but I am still interested in why they are leaving. I can reassure parents that we are recruiting teachers, that teachers are in place, and I can reassure parents that the teachers that are there in front of their children everyday are massively committed to ensuring that their children have the best experience they possibly can. In terms of terms and conditions, yes, absolutely want to do that but I remind this Assembly that when I took over, teachers were in dispute. They were striking. They were demonstrating outside of this Assembly. That has not happened for the last year, and I hope that does not happen again. I hope we can come to a good resolution of terms and conditions and start to build way into the future into a sustainable way so that future Assemblies do not have that situation again that was created by the last Government.