

3.5 Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. John of the Minister for Education regarding the use of carry forwards to cover the funding shortfall created by not achieving M.T.F.P. saving for the Nursery Education Fund: [1(121)]

Given his answer to a written question on 30th January 2017, that funding to cover the shortfall created by not achieving the M.T.F.P. (Medium Term Financial Plan) saving for the Nursery Education Fund will be met through carry forwards, will the Minister explain what certainty there is that this money will be available for the 2017/18 academic year and advise exactly from which budgets these carry forwards will come?

Deputy R.G. Bryans of St. Helier (The Minister for Education):

Thank you to the Deputy to allow me to clarify the issue. We had a meeting of the Council of Ministers last Wednesday where the funding of the £250,000 was verified will be found. I can give absolute certainty to parents that the Nursery Education Fund will remain the same for the next academic year. As the Deputy knows, the processes for all departments' underspends are to be pooled and then reallocated to high-priority projects. The Chief Minister agrees that this is a high priority and the necessary funding will be found through carry forwards. With reference to where the funding will come from, that is a Treasury matter.

3.5.1 The Deputy of St. John:

I thank the Minister for that confirmation and I thank the Council of Ministers for finally approving the funding. My follow-up question is: does the Minister really find it acceptable that we are towards the end of February, after his department sending out nursery places to parents, and providing no certainty at that point in time that there is availability of funding so those parents have the choice as to whether they use public nurseries or private nurseries?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

I think the Deputy is aware of the issue with regard to the budgets and where we can find the certainty and at what particular point in time and, as I say, that was resolved in last Wednesday's Council of Ministers' meeting. It is generally the case that most parents will start to look at booking their places on nurseries, whether it is with the private sector or the States sector, in mid-February, end of February. So, again, as we did previously, we wanted to tell parents as quickly as possible what the situation is and I can verify we have now the certainty. Thank you.