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STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

School Examination Results

THURSDAY, 24th MARCH 2011

Panel:
Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman)
Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour
Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

Witness:
Mr. J. Mills

Also Present:
Mr. W. Millow (Scrutiny Officer)

[16:00]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman):

I will now ask your name?

Mr. J. Mills:

My name is John Mills.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I wonder, John, very quickly, since we are in the unusual position of running Scrutiny with 2 witnesses essentially, so can you as a witness give the panel and the public a brief background of yourself?

Mr. J. Mills:

Yes, indeed, I am retired from a full-time career now but I was a career civil servant, both in Whitehall and in English local government, and in Hong Kong, and in Jersey where I was the Chief Officer of the former Policy and Resources Committee of the old days. Then I went back into Whitehall. I'm retired from full-time work now but I have a variety of non-executive positions,

both in Jersey and in the U.K. (United Kingdom), and I am also Chairman of Governors of a large school in London.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you. Can you briefly say what kind of school?

Mr. J. Mills:

An independent school.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

As you may have read in the paper, the purpose of this Scrutiny is obviously to hear from Mr. Mills how he reached the conclusions that he did reach; to get some of his thoughts on how he thinks those conclusions impact on current and future educational provision on the Island, and when we have the Minister tomorrow obviously we will hear what the department feels about the whole matter of how you measure or how you assess or how you evaluate student performance and, perhaps by extension, school performance, so we will hear from that side also. So I wonder, Mr. Mills, could you tell us what are the key findings from the work you have recently done in relation to exam results?

Mr. J. Mills:

Thank you, Chairman. If I could just preface the full answer by saying that I am not a statistician, I received something like 300 pages of spreadsheets from the department, the department keeps extensive statistical information on the performance of all the schools in the Island, and I have not even, over the last month or so, got through it all. I have focused on 2010 because I think that is where the debate has lain, but I asked for 10 years' data and I received 5 years' data, the other 5 is yet to be released to me, and there was some technical difficulty over that. So really I have done my level best to interpret the data and to analyse it and to try and pull threads from it, but I really think, if you want to get the best statistical analysis, you probably need to call as a witness one of the experts from the department. So I would just like to preface it by saying that. My key finding is that the - and I am looking at 2010 G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) here; that is what I am looking at - is that Jersey's performance through its 9 secondary schools in aggregate was pretty close to the averages in both England and the U.K., the U.K. is not often very different from England because England is so dominant in the U.K. calculation, and the basis of that judgment is looking at the fairly widely used measure of 5 or more G.C.S.E. passes at grades A* to C, including English and maths. That is a standard measure, which is used right through, and it is right through all the Jersey data as well, and I know there has been some debate in the newspapers about it, but it is not a bad proxy for performance,

it is what everyone seems to use. Jersey is pretty close and some of those percentages have been put out into the newspaper, and that should not be, to my mind, or anybody's mind, be much of a surprise in truth. Most people cluster around the averages fairly clearly, most parts of the country. But there are some interesting perceptions one can draw from it. If we compare Jersey with the regions in the south of England, southeast, southwest, London, east, Jersey is a bit behind, in other words the north of England pulls the England average down, and we are a little bit behind Northern Ireland, which is quite an interesting comparison. These are not huge differences but they are interesting to note. I started from the presumption that, given Jersey's demography and given Jersey's G.D.P. (gross domestic product) per capita, and the perception of Jersey as a prosperous Island, I might have thought that those Jersey averages would have been a bit higher; that was my starting point. But they are quite close to the England averages. But what I then noticed, and this is what I think was most striking and probably most worrying for public policy in the Island, was that there were some very large variations in performance between the schools in Jersey. On the same measure, the 5 plus, including English and math, A* to C, the percentage variations are surprisingly large from the 90 per cents, which is up with the very best, down to a low of 18 per cent, and of course the 18 per cent in one school is an amalgam of boys and girls, and the girls always do rather better, so the boys especially are performing, by any standards, at a rather low level. So, out of 9 secondary schools in Jersey, where G.C.S.E.s are run, 3 of those schools had figures on that measure of 18 per cent, 20 per cent and 29 per cent, and that puts 2 of them into the top 10 of bottom performers in England, which I think is really quite surprising and probably, I think, quite shocking, if truth be told. In England, my understanding of the data is that there are 236 schools across the country, which are below the floor standard, which has been set by the department, of 35 per cent on that measure, the 5 As to Cs including English and maths, and below the floor quite difficult things start to happen, both to head teachers and to local education authorities who allow it to happen, and that is where you start getting triggers around pupil premiums and around special measures and risk-based inspections and so forth, in other words action is prompted by those kinds of performance figures. Just in passing, that floor figure of 35 is very close to the aggregate performance across the country, England that is, of all those pupils on free school meals, which is one proxy for social class, and that is 36 per cent. When I then see 3 of Jersey's schools on 18, 20 and 29, I think rightly an alarm bell should be sounded, it just seems to me to be completely unacceptable, and I think it is the worst, and we will probably come on to this, because it does seem, and I hesitate to say whether this is deliberate or not, but it does seem that this has not been publicised for the reason is that it is really rather shocking, and I find that really very troubling. If one just looks at a couple of other key pieces of data that has come out of my analysis, the G.C.S.E. cohort in Jersey last summer was about 1,000 children, almost exactly half and half girls and boys, not quite, but almost, and 45 per cent of all of them; that is about 450 in all, did not get that attainment of 5 plus

including English and maths, and that 45 per cent included 40 per cent of the whole cohort in those 3 worst-performing schools. Then 2 other statistics, then I will stop, there were about 8,000 entries in Jersey from the cohort of 1,000 pupils, and 25 per cent of those entries were at grade D or below, and of that 25 per cent, I think this is quite a telling point, 17 per cent of those were from fee-paying schools. It is very important in looking at this data, and this is why I hope, when the Minister makes a real effort to get it into the public domain so everybody can see it, it is worth noting this is not just about one or 2 or 3 schools in the Island. There are some issues you can pick out from this material, cutting right across the range, at both G.C.S.E. and at A level. I am not sure you want to go there today, but the data is extremely rich and one can dig those things out.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

When you say 17 per cent from fee-paying schools; are those the selective fee-paying schools, or what might be termed non-selective?

Mr. J. Mills:

Those are the fee-paying schools.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do they operate, as far as you know, a selective entrance policy, or non-selective?

Mr. J. Mills:

You would have to ask the Heads or the Chairmen of those schools, but I think there is some element of selection in some of them, perhaps more in some than others, but I think I am not qualified to answer that.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

If I can just come in, Mr. Chairman. I think there will be many listening here, and the counter-arguments have been quite clearly displayed already, that we are not comparing like to like. So you say that certain Jersey schools would compare with the bottom 10 in the U.K., the question has to be asked, are those 10 schools surrounded by the same context of schools and this whole selective process that we have in Jersey, first of all, which is ability based, and also which is to do with fee-paying?

Mr. J. Mills:

I think it is a good question you raise, and it has been touched on in the media. I think we can take ... I am not particularly interested in U.K. comparison, I am struck by it because it is one of

the success criteria in the department's business plan, they have attached long importance to it obviously, and it is telling because that is where a lot of the data sources are and the comparisons are quite useful, but I am more interested in looking at absolute performance. If you have a school in this prosperous and good Island, which is funded at high cost by taxpayers, every penny is from taxpayers, and it is producing outcomes of this quality, I think some questions need to be asked of the school and of the administration that oversees the school.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So, if we do compare it overall, rather than just looking at those schools, which have already been through a rigorous deselection process, if you like, for their students, we are looking at, on the A to C grades at 55 per cent, how does that compare with ...

Mr. J. Mills:

I am not looking at any deselection at all, there is a process in Jersey, I mean I am not an expert on it, but I have learned what it is, and at age 14 pupils who achieve a certain score in these various internal value-added tests, I think they are enabled to go to Hautlieu if they choose to. There is some confusion in the department's literature, as I perceive it, as to the nature of that choice, it is not a free choice, if pupils do not make the cut then they do not get the choice, unless ... and so forth. But that obviously has a destabilising effect on the 4 remaining schools; it is obvious, is it not? It is destabilising, not only because they are losing pupils who may well be among their better performers, they are also losing parents who may be among their better performers, if you can speak of parents in that way too, and, as I hear anecdotally, it is an extremely disruptive process in year 9. It is hardly surprising when you think about it, is it? I was talking to one youngster at one of these schools who has not transferred to Hautlieu, but I think could have done had she wanted to, and I was really struck by the way she said: "We spent half the year faffing about this, people talking about it, they are going to do it, they are not going to do it, and work does not get done." It just seems to be a rather ... the disruption is quite serious; that is what I would surmise, but I would be interested to hear what the Minister might have to say on that, he might disagree. So I am more interested in the absolute figure, we have 4 schools in Jersey, which are not comprehensive schools, they are secondary modern schools, in the old parlance, and they do not appear to me to be performing as well as they jolly well should be in a place like this, for the resources that we make available to them, and they are certainly not performing anything like as well as has been mooted, if you like, in the public arena over many years. If you have schools like those, which are turning out figures at that low level, then something has to be done. It does not matter what the school structure is, something has to be done, because we are denying a lot of children a good start in life. If we cannot get high

percentages of all the youngsters up to a basic level ... a good level, but a basic level in English in maths, where are we going?

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

What do you deem as a basic level in English and maths?

Mr. J. Mills:

Well I could have a long debate about that. I am going on the basis of an A to C, down to a C in English, A* to C. That is what a lot of the pundits in the education world appear to go on. Some people might say different, but that seems to me to be reasonable, and if you ... whatever the talk about academic versus vocational, no one is saying that you drop English and maths in favour of the vocational, you might do the vocational, which is very good, but the Jersey syllabus, the Jersey curriculum, requires English and maths up to the age of 16, and, as the Wolf Report recently said, the most important vocational studies of all are English and maths, and we are not doing it, we have terrible figures in certain schools, and that is the heart of the matter. That is the heart of the matter, in my opinion.

[16:15]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you. I will ... well, the next question is yours.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you. What in your view is the fundamental purpose of school education?

Mr. J. Mills:

A big question. I say we have a big debate about what ... I think the first thing to say is: “What is education?” because I think you cannot answer “what is school education?” without first asking “what is education?”, and everyone will have different views about this. I have tried to write down what I think the purpose of education is, and I have written down 4 things. Firstly - and this is not school education; this is education in the round - to equip children with numeracy, literacy, problem-solving skills and such soft skills such as people skills, communications, and so forth, that employers need, number one. Number 2, to give pupils the historical, literary, cultural and scientific context, which they need to interpret and make sense of the world. Number 3, to inspire pupils to what to and to be able to continue to learn independently beyond their youth at the higher level where relevant and beyond. Fourthly, to prepare young people for employment with transferable skills, including all the things that are so important on I.T. (information technology)

and so forth. Then you ask yourself: "Well what is the school meant to be doing?" Well, a long time ago most people did not go to school, or they did not go to school very much, and gradually over the last hundred years or so, and more intensively over the last half century or so in our world, the State has taken on a larger role in this with the compulsory school years and so forth. I suppose what has happened is that all those things are done by parents and done in a child's orbit the whole time, but the school takes on a role of reinforcing that and in many cases perhaps substituting for it, and so I suppose the purpose of school education is to take all those things in a systematic way and approach them with the appropriate expertise and skills that teachers and a good community and a good background and a good orbit, to enable children to achieve those various objectives, which they carry on achieving those things when they go home in the afternoon and on the weekends and in holidays, but the school obviously plays a very important role there. I also think, I suppose, that, where social factors ... where adverse social factors come into play in these situations, the public policy response is to put more weight on the school element of education as opposed to let us say the home element. If you have children from broken homes or from difficult backgrounds, you have ethnic issues and so forth, then the schools ... the weight of the school in social policy becomes the greater.

Deputy M. Tadier:

There is an issue though, of course, I mean first of all the statistics ... it is difficult to judge from the statistics exactly why certain results are lower than others, and, as you said, there can be adverse social factors, but also the schools themselves will have an issue that, with picking up certain behavioural problems, they will not always be aware of home situations.

Mr. J. Mills:

That is fair. That is fair. The point I should have made, or perhaps it is worth making now, because it is very important, and that is that ... this is not just in Jersey ... there is quite a significant gender difference in those figures. In the 4 non-selective secondary schools, in each case there is what is to my mind a statistically significant difference between boys' and girls' performance in virtually all the subjects. At Hautlieu there is no difference at all, and in the other schools ... the other schools it does not apply. Hautlieu has almost equal outcomes for boys and girls, but the other 4 do not. My understanding is that is quite a common feature across the U.K., the gender difference, it has all sorts of implications and all sorts of messages and challenges for policy in Jersey. Are our schools doing enough in particular to motivate young boys, given some of the issues that researchers, especially in the U.K., have identified around their inability to perform well, or as well, in school? I do not know the answer to that; I do not have a clue, I do not know. You will have to ask the Minister. Are we right in some of those schools in focusing on vocational G.C.S.E.s, which are good things, but they are course-work dominated, and some

researchers will say that boys are not as good as girls at that. So I do not know whether it is right or wrong, I am not here to give you that answer, but I think these are issues, which this material points to, and which has really remained hidden in the public debate in the Island.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

If I can just quiz you about what a G.C.S.E. tells you, because I note in your *What is Education*, the basic Rs, reading, writing and arithmetic, seem to be at the top there in part of your package. Does someone who attains say a D grade, therefore, in your view has not reached the basic level of education, does that mean that they are not literate?

Mr. J. Mills:

I am not saying that. I am not saying that at all, but what I am saying is that you have to measure something somewhere, and, as I perceive things, and let the Minister say if it is different, but as I perceive things that measure of 5-plus A* to C, including maths and English, has become quite a generally accepted measure, it is quite a yardstick for school outcomes. That is all it is, a yardstick for school outcomes. Public examinations have performed this role for centuries in different spheres, and public examinations are just that, they are public, they are externally moderated and they are what people in the next phase, whether it is the higher education phase or the university phase or the employer phase, it is what people look at, and it is the ticket you have, just like a driving test in a sense. You know, if you are one mark under the driving test you fail, you do not get a D, you fail.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Just, it is interesting, with these results, I mean you have termed them as a yardstick, not an absolute something to measure, do you think that, from the publication of this information, however it is disseminated, when it is presented to the general public they are able to ... in general, people are able to say: “This is a yardstick measurement; there is more to it”, or do you accept some of the concerns raised that people might take these as absolutes?

Mr. J. Mills:

I have a very high opinion of the general public, being a member of it myself, and I think it is an outrageous position for any bureaucracy to presume that people cannot handle information; I think it is unbelievably outrageous, it is so outrageous that it makes me go sort of red in the face, because of course you have to analyse data, we have data coming out of our ears, some parts of the States of Jersey are very good at producing information, we are awash with it, and then we have a debate about how you use it, how you analyse it, what conclusions you draw, but without the basic data of what our schools are doing after these children have been in compulsory

education for 11 years, without that basic data that we can then draw our different analyses from, we are going to get nowhere. It is a debate that has no foundation and that is the heart of the matter as far as I am ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think the better question would probably be to phrase it in terms of meaningfulness of the statistics, so ...

Mr. J. Mills:

They are just one set of statistics, but, if the department has something better, let them disclose it. I do not think they have anything better. You might want to talk about the value added thing in a minute, but I do not think they have anything better. It is a ... if people understand it, people know, if you have some G.C.S.E.s or some A levels, when you go to get a job the little form will say: "List your G.C.S.E.s", it does not say: "List your value added score", it says: "List your G.C.S.E.s", and it enables an employer, it enables a university, or whatever, to make a selection, or to begin a process of selection, in a reasonable kind of way.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can we get back to the reasons you gave for the purpose of education, you gave 4 reasons, which I think broadly people would not disagree with, although they might prioritise it slightly differently, it seemed to be that you focused quite heavily, certainly in your first point and the last point seemed to focus very much on the employability of students, which is fair. There is an argument of course to be had as to whether education is there for the market or whether it is there in its own sake, I am sure we would agree it is there for both purposes.

Mr. J. Mills:

It is there for both purposes, but we are talking at a fairly basic level. I was privileged to spend several years at the taxpayers' expense writing a thesis on medieval history, it was a great training for my career as it turned out, but I did not know it at the time. I am not talking about that, I am not talking about Latin and Greek, we cannot offer it at schools in Jersey, I am talking about English and maths, I am talking about the fact that you cannot get a job in a shop unless you can speak English or you can add up.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I challenge that, because I think, to play devil's advocate, employment has changed and one criticism would be that your observations are too English and maths centric. Is that a fair ...

Mr. J. Mills:

It is a fair comment. I do not think I agree with it, but it is a very fair comment. They are not the only subjects. You have to look across the piece, whether they are academic subjects or vocational subjects or whatever, I fully accept that. But you have to have a yardstick somewhere and it just seems to me, and this is what one perceives employers saying, in general, that, if our youngsters are not equipped in these essential arts of being able to speak and read and listen and comprehend and enumerate, where will things end up? I mean that to my mind seems to me to be a very fair point, and you can have a very long debate about whether this list of subjects or that list of subjects ... but you will not get an answer to that, you can mix it up. But, by common consent, as I observe things, those 2, English and maths, seem to be, or should be, at the top of the tree, for reasons which are really quite obvious.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But would you say it is a fair comment, I mean English itself is changing, I mean the way we communicate with technology, employers might find it preferable that, so long as somebody can basically count and can speak and can communicate ...

Mr. J. Mills:

Yes, an employer will make a judgment on anybody, but I do not know, have you ever recruited someone? If you run a recruitment exercise and you want to fill a position, you get 200 applications, what you do, you sift them, you sift them, and you sift them on some very basic criteria. If you want to go to university in the competitive world you get sifted. If you want to go to one of the selecting universities, the first thing they look at is your string of G.C.S.E.s, because they think they are quite a good predictor of degree performance. They select; that is why people are scrambling to trying and get their 3 A grades to get into places. It is what we do; it does not meant to say that someone with 3 A grades is a better person than someone with 3 B grades, that is not the issue, the issue is we live in a tough world and the purpose, one of the purposes of the taxpayer funding the education system is to give all these young people in the Island and elsewhere the best possible start in life, and, we should be pretty ashamed if we are not doing that. On this evidence, we are not. If the Minister has other evidence I really would love to see it, but he has not disclosed it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Would you accept though that, while the A to C grades may be an indicator for a potential employer, they are not necessarily the same criteria that educationalists, or we in society, should be looking at as the ultimate test of ...

Mr. J. Mills:

Nothing is ultimate, nothing is ultimate. We live by yardsticks, we live by yardsticks. You know, that is what we do.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you think - then I will come back to Monty who has the third question - it has been suggested, I have to get this one in, John, it has been suggested you are ideologically driven in your views of education, would you accept that statement?

Mr. J. Mills:

No.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

If I can just go back to a question for number one before we leave that area, it has just come to me. Going back to the data and talking about the floor and the basic level, we know that not everyone is able to get say a C grade in English and maths. Do you accept that as a possibility?

Mr. J. Mills:

No. How do you know that? Nobody knows that. I do not know that, you do not know that. We assert it. Educationalists assert it; it is a very convenient assertion. What is true? It might be true, it might not be true. It seems to me that there is a real ... a real, real weakness in our system here if we are justifying poor performance on the basis that these children cannot do better. I just think that is ... that is a tremendously bad approach and it is a wrong approach and it does not do the children justice and I do not believe the teachers justice either.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think we would all agree that it is important, if not imperative, that when a student has finished his or her education, which may not finish at 16, it could be 18 or 21, and just for the record we will be asking the Education Department for those who go on to take or re-sit G.C.S.E.s at a later date, so the point is ... I think I lost my train of thought slightly there; I have missed the train unfortunately. But ...

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

On this premise, just the basic thing is, you do not accept that not everyone is able to achieve a C grade in English and maths?

[16:30]

Mr. J. Mills:

I do not have a clue. I would not presume to know the answer, and if anybody does presume to know the answer they are kidding you. All I see, of the children that I have been associated with in the school where I am Chairman of Governors, in the school that my wife runs, and in the schools I have been involved with, and in the policy debates I have had in my past career, is that children are capable of the most amazing things if you help them, guide them, teach them and drive them. You can see so many examples around the U.K., where ... of schools especially where, through inspirational leadership and real drive from all quarters to get standards up and to improve things and to raise the standard of education, great things can happen, whether it is vocational, whether it is music, the arts, drama, maths, science, languages, anything. So I do not accept your premise and I do not think ... more importantly, I think from a public policy perspective; that is what we are interested in here, it seems to me to be a very, very, very unwise premise, because it is a premise, which builds in complacency, and that is what we should avoid in any debate about any public service.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

But at the same token, do you accept that there are some that would argue that, no matter what is poured in, there is always going to be a level that certain individuals will inevitably reach, no matter how well the leadership is, et cetera, et cetera.

Mr. J. Mills:

You try and ensure that everyone can reach their potential, but I would ... it would be a very brave man or woman to say what an individual's potential was.

Deputy M. Tadier:

If I come back, I have remembered the point, even with my 5 A to C grades, one is not ... one can still have short lapses of memory. I think the point is, we would agree that, irrespective of what the measures are for G.C.S.E.s and for English and maths, part of the problem is that the exam results themselves are predicated on a system of a natural distribution curve, so in any one given sitting there has to be a certain amount of people who get the As, the Cs, the Ds and the Gs, et cetera, so I think your point perhaps is that educationalists, and as a society, we should be making sure that, when people leave school, they have the requisite skills in English and maths, not just in those areas, but that perhaps the G.C.S.E. is not the right way to do it.

Mr. J. Mills:

Well it might not be, but I just put it a little more simply than this. In Jersey we have some jolly good schools, some jolly good schools, funded by the taxpayer, either wholly or partly, and their results are, on the G.C.S.E.s from last year, without exception ... well the Victoria College, Jersey College for Girls and Hautlieu are up in the 90-somethings, and that is pretty good by any standards, you are never going to get quite 100, one or 2 schools in England do, but not many. I just say to myself, if we can have that kind of excellence up the road, why can we not have that sort of excellence down the road, what is different, and are we saying it is because the kids cannot do it? That is the most feeble and pathetic excuse.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Surely the answer is it is because we have the excellence up the road that we cannot have it down the road.

Mr. J. Mills:

On the contrary, if you have excellence up the road, you can have it down the road. That is what I would do, and why not? Of course it is challenging, of course there are social factors, of course there are resource issues, but just to say: "Oh, well we have all these selective ones up there, therefore this lot are not going to perform", is so bad from a policy perspective, I find it hard to comprehend you asking the question almost. We just have to get it better, we just have to get it better. It is the same with any other public service that one can think of.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

All right, Monty, could you ask your question now?

Deputy M. Tadier:

The next question is to do with the implications, if any, what implications does the proportion of students at selective schools have for the performance of 11-16, it is very much a follow-on from ...

Mr. J. Mills:

Well it is a follow on, and I do not pretend to know all the answers to this, I really, really do not, but I just think that this - the information that is now - the department have now made public, is ... gives one some very interesting pointers towards some of the factors that policy makers need to weigh. I have just noted a few down here, I have probably said these things already. The first thing to say is that the 4 11-16 schools are not comprehensives. I think a lot of people have always thought they were comprehensives, but they are not comprehensives, they have a break

at this age of 14 and when the people go on to Hautlieu, and I have already made the point that it seems prima facie to me that is disruptive, not only to those who are going, but those who are staying, and particularly so to those who want to go but cannot go; that is the really hard bit. The debate about secondary moderns versus comprehensives was fiercely fought in the U.K. in the 1960s onwards, 1970s, 1980s, and it still rears its head, but the truth is it is a debate that has now been consigned to history really, and the trick now is to get any school, whatever its structure, and make something really top-class of it through whatever means are at your disposal. But I think that I do get a sense that those schools have a hand tied behind their back because of the change; that just seems to me to be obvious. I have made the point, they do not lose ... they do not only lose potentially able pupils, they lose potentially able parents who have helped form the community of the school, and I am sure that has an impact. The other point is this: it must be hard, it must be hard, to attract and retain teachers to schools in that situation. I am acquainted with a teacher in one of those schools, a very good man, and I think he is a pretty good teacher, and he is doing what most teachers do, he is looking in another few years to move on and get a head of department and move up, and so ... and he said to me in some despair not very long ago: "I am not sure I am going to be able to get a job in an English comprehensive school because they keep saying to me I am not teaching in one, I am not ... you know, I do not have the experience." He was very troubled by that, not least because he thought he had been brought to Jersey on a slightly false prospectus, but that is another matter. But, you know, teachers, if ... I find that at my school in London, is that the reasons that attract teachers to a certain school are manifold, or a certain type of school or a certain situation, and you have to put a huge amount of effort and resource into ensuring that the offer, not just the financial offer, but the work offer, is of the first ... of the first quality, and I suspect that we are causing that not to happen properly. But I would also say this: if we have the system we have, I do not sense great radical desire on the part of the Minister and his department to change it, I mean events might force his hand one day, but I do not say that at the moment.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think to be fair that is not ... whatever the results of this review, that is going to be ...

Mr. J. Mills:

No, exactly, but the key ... the point that I find interesting, if these schools were in England and they had results at the level they have, they would be targeted across the piece, pupil premiums, special measures, annual public inspections, the head held to account, the local authority held to account, debates like this about the performance of the school, and they would be in the public eye and there would be a tremendous administrative and managerial pressure to improve.

Deputy M. Tadier:

If I can ask now, because the obvious question from the critics would be that it is impossible to compare local schools to the U.K. for the reasons we have given, we have a selective system, which I think you have acknowledged yourself, will have an implication on what results end up getting achieved.

Mr. J. Mills:

No, I am not accepting that. I am accepting that is in practice what happens, but what I am also saying is, is that if we do not aim high and sort ourselves out and make these schools better, give those children a life chance, we are failing in our duty, we collectively as citizens, you as legislators, people here in the education profession, people who are just citizens, taxpayers, we are failing in our duty, and we just have to do something about it, that is all I am saying. The schools in England that are in the lowest 10 or 20, they are an interesting mix, they are from all over the place, some of them look quite rural to me, some look quite urban, some look quite big, some look quite small, they all have value-added scores against them, which do not mean very much, but it is quite an interesting mix. But each one of these is being targeted by the system to improve or else it shuts, and I just sort of sense in my bones that is not what we are doing here, and that is the problem, because every year that goes by, another group, a cohort of youngsters, are not getting what they deserve. That is all.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think we take that onboard, I think the question is though, can that be done without unravelling the whole system, so if we ...

Mr. J. Mills:

You can do anything if you want to do it, you just aim high, you do not have to unravel the whole system, you just make it work better.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am not saying it is, it may be desirable to ...

Mr. J. Mills:

You just have to make things work better and not assume you cannot do things because people are not up to it. That is my philosophy anyway.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

There is going to be quite a lot of overlap, John, between questions obviously, so we will come ... we will follow the sequence, but clearly we have done some of this. From your knowledge about this subject, what account should be made for the socioeconomic status of pupils when assessing the performance of schools?

Mr. J. Mills:

When you see a list such as this, which is the bottom performance in England, you know in your heart when you look at where some of these are that there are social factors galore that are impacting on them, the schools here in the middle of Kingston Upon Hull, for example, in Calderdale, in wherever, you know, you can sort of pick this up quite readily, it is not absolute you pick it up, but you do not then say: "Oh, well, you know, they all have ethnic minorities and they have broken homes and whatever, so we are going to just assign them to the bin." You say: "There are some social factors there, how can we counteract those social factors?" That is what social policy is about. Social policy in the last 100 years has been about countering social disadvantage. In Jersey, there is rather more social disadvantage, it appears, than some people have wanted to own. The place is full of social disadvantage if you start looking for it, and people have been a little bit shy of talking about it I suspect. This data I think helps shine one light upon that, but if you have social disadvantage in certain catchment areas, in certain schools, and it is reflected in some of these performance things, then the policy response is to redouble your effort through whatever means there are at your disposal, and that is about leadership and resources, to improve things. That is what you do.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can you talk to us a bit about the parental influence, because you have already alluded in your previous statements about the fact that certain schools will lose the parental influence, and to what extent is that a factor in results?

Mr. J. Mills:

I just look back to when my kids were at school, you know, goods schools involve parents in a whole range of things, and to involve parents you need parents who are ready to be involved, and it is not always easy to do. Some schools do it brilliantly, some schools are less good at it, some fall in the middle, but you have to work at it, but from both sides, and a school, as I have observed, they are communities, they are part of the community, but they are communities themselves, so my comment is simply that, if you have aspirational parents whose children go to the state secondary schools, their aspiration is to get out at 14, is it not? Their aspiration is not to serve the school and stick with the school and help make something of it. There is one exception

to that, because one of the schools is geographically distinct, and so some of the choices are different and some of the performance results show that very clearly.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

But even then, I mean I know from my own personal experience, that, just because perhaps some in the state schools, the secondary state schools, are offered the opportunity to go to Hautlieu for that individual student, they do not necessarily go.

Mr. J. Mills:

Yes, they make a choice. They make a choice. But quite a lot go, because the choice is there, I mean I cannot remember whatever the number is, quite a number go, and it seems to be enough to have an impact upon the academic performance, probably perhaps the wider performance, of the residual school. I think from a policy perspective, I think you ought to ask some hard questions about that, because it does not look right, to me anyway.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You have talked of socioeconomic status, and your answer, as I understand it, John, has been that schools, the department, society, has to redouble its effort. Do you think though that it has been argued, and I will give you the devil's advocate argument, it has been argued that some schools have a particular concentration of students who have fairly severe social issues, may not have parental support, do you think there is a real issue that if you concentrate a lot of those students in one school you will make it very difficult for that school?

Mr. J. Mills:

I am just not expert enough to answer that really, Chairman. But you can apply some sort of general principles to this. You can probably make silk purses out of pigs' ears if you set your mind to it, whatever you do, and there are some fabulous examples that you can point to, not just in England, all around the place. You can also point to examples I think where, with the very best of intentions and the best of efforts and the allocation of resources, you know, things do not work for whatever reason. So I think it is hard to generalise quite honestly. But the basic proposition must be that, if we have adverse social factors impacting upon public service delivery, we should do something about it, and that doing something is about ensuring that leadership is right, ensuring that policy is right, and ensuring that resourcing is right. I just get the impression here, because they do not publish much data, I just get the impression that the resource allocation is skewed, to the higher end and not the lower end. I am sure some people will say that is not so, but you just get that sense, and it was brought to life when there was that row last year about the fees for the ...

[16:45]

The Minister's sentiments on that were so absolutely correct, but he was faced with a middleclass furore, you know, and Ministers, in my experience, when faced with middleclass furores, retreat fast, and that is a mark of wisdom in a Minister. But, you know, the serious point is that the whole focus of that debate was about the middle classes in the Island having to pay more, it was not about the impact upon the ... you know, the resource impact on the rest of the system, and I have not even mentioned the word "primary school" yet.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Funnily enough, we were talking about that before the meeting, because clearly early intervention is key and maybe the Chairman wants to say something about that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Well, there were figures produced in 2009, oddly enough, I do not know if you dug them out, to a question from my good self of all people, basically a large number ... and it was partly brought to bear by the constituents of Highlands College, among other people, the large number of primary school students who were leaving without literacy and mathematics, it was in the mid-30s. I do not know if you came across this, this was in November 2009.

Mr. J. Mills:

No, but I mean it is ... Jersey is not alone on that, I mean it is obviously a common issue. I do not pretend to have great knowledge about it, but, if secondary schools are saying ... well, put it this way, if the F.E. (Further Education) and H.E. (Higher Education) end are saying that the secondary output is not up to the mark, then the secondary lot are saying the primary output is not up to the mark, and then the primary lot are saying that the nursery output is not up to the mark, so you get a sort of ... you have the wrong approach on it, everyone has the wrong end of the stick, you have to work across the whole piece to make things better; that is what the purpose of policy is, I think.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We come to your favourite subject, Jeremy.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Not my favourite subject. Could you tell us what your understanding of the value-added concept is and then, from that, what your view is on value-added measurements of schools' performance?

Mr. J. Mills:

I am quite interested in value-added, and I think it is rather a good thing, but it has its limitations, and you do not have to dig very far into the literature to see what those limitations are, and the fact that many academics and experts have been arguing for donkeys' years about what is right and what is wrong, and one has to bear that in mind. I go back to my U.K. experience, English experience, in England the school performance tables based on exam results were first published in 1992 and this was as a result of John Major's *Citizens' Charter* initiative, which you may well recall, and at the same time Ofsted was established as an independent inspection agency for schools; the inspection system before that had been very opaque and hidden within the department of Education and was not helping to ensure accountability for school performance. So it was a very big change. The first value-added performance tables were produced about a decade later, I think in 2002, and for primary schools in 2003, and experts who may be here will know all that, and so every table you now get in the English system has this ... this one here has the value added, it has the G.C.S.E. score, these are the lowest-performing schools, and you can see these low percentages of G.C.S.E.s, and these are the value-added scores on the right. Now the trouble with these value-added scores is they are absolutely meaningless to people like me, to you, to most people. What do they mean? Then when you look into the literature you see that different people think they mean different things. Are they based solely on prior attainment? So G.C.S.E., which is K.S.4 (key stage 4), do you measure the value added at G.C.S.E. by looking at teachers' assessments at K.S.3, and down the line, or do you, as some experts argue you should do, create a contextualised assessment, which tries to bring in the social factors, and then you get the bedevilled by definitional problems and so forth. You are probably aware, or I hope the Minister has made you aware, of a very large O.E.C.D. (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) study, which the U.K. has been contributing towards, on value-added measurement in education systems in the O.E.C.D. countries, and it is most interesting, I mean it is really interesting, there is some challenging stuff there, but they are all saying that the ... getting the measurement right is the hard bit, because, if you do not put the right stuff in at the bottom, you do not get the right result at the end. But the broad point is this, the broad point is this, it goes back to what we said before, let us say you do have a value-added measure so that you have teacher assessments let us say of performance of children at K.S.3; that is K.S.3 at whatever age they are, about 14 or something, and that forms then the basis for the value-added judgment at 16, K.S.4, which is where the G.C.S.E comes in. Now, the G.C.S.E. is the one public element of that, it is externally moderated, and it is a fairly respected benchmark, because there is quite a big sort of system around it, which has a fair amount of public confidence. What are the pressures on an organisation in that situation? Is there pressure to up the ante on K.S.3, or down the ante? The lower the K.S.3 assessment, the higher the value added, if a child then performs at an

expected level at G.C.S.E, and at G.C.S.E. the teacher cannot control that by and large, there is still some coursework in G.C.S.E., but by and large the external moderation kicks in. So you can have a huge debate about it, and it is very interesting. Now it is separate, it is quite separate, if you want ... I guess if teachers and schools want to measure pupils' progress as they go along, a child comes into the school and is assessed to have a reading age of whatever, and you track progress; that is terrific, everyone is in favour and that is what you do. But the test then, if that child then has a leaving G.C.S.E. at the end, that is the way of you as legislators, me as a taxpayer, everyone else, seeing if the school has delivered, and seeing if the child then has some measurable standard of attainment, which he or she can then take into the next phase of life. So they are slightly different sorts of things, they are all linked up but they are slightly different. So I do not think it is right to say: "Oh, measuring exam statistics is not a good way of doing performance, we should do value-added", they are all tied in together. The G.C.S.E.s are the end mark of the value-added process. The O.E.C.D. study, which I do recommend you look at, if you have not, is very interesting, because it is written in surprisingly jargon-free language, and really does give one some insight into the real statistical and measurement problems that are there, and I am sure the department will be able to brief you, or the Minister will be able to brief you on that tomorrow.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you think value-added is, assuming all these various definition issues could be sorted out, or philosophical issues can be sorted out, and presumably in that paper you quoted, John, there is a definition of what value-added is?

Mr. J. Mills:

Yes, value-added is very simple, but it is just ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

But do you think it is a valid thing to use in explaining why different schools perform differently?

Mr. J. Mills:

Yes, of course it ... it is entirely valid, it is entirely valid, provided you can be confident that it is measuring something, and that is the hard bit, you know, and it is easier to do it on a prior attainment basis, because it is kind of easier, but as long as you have confidence in the prior attainment measure, which would not be externally assessed, but contextualising it for social factors becomes hard. So what we end up doing, you do as legislators, I do as a dinner party gossip, you make judgments based on your own experience and your own sort of world view of these kinds of things, we all do.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

But do you think, for example, it is reasonable for a school to say: “Look, given the cohort we have, given the social environment from which we recruit students, we do not have the kind of parental support you would get “in a middleclass school”, do you think that is a valid reason for them to put forward to say why they have not achieved at the level you would wish?

Mr. J. Mills:

It is a valid thing for them to say, but I would then challenge them to perform notwithstanding it, and you then create mechanisms and incentives to do that. That is what we have to do in a public service. The health system is exactly the same. You can think of all sorts of other branches of the public service where the same obtains, otherwise we just have a recipe for complacency and we will go nowhere. Of course those factors apply, of course they are relevant, you know, at all levels in all schools you will find such factors, and what the school ... if the school is doing anything, or achieving anything for the taxpayers’ resources it is consuming, it is making a difference, it is overcoming those factors, and that is the whole ... that is the whole basis of social policy, of good social policy anyway.

Deputy M. Tadier:

This is probably a good time to ask the question about whether you advocate league tables or not.

Mr. J. Mills:

I do not care about league tables.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is this a league table? Would this ...

Mr. J. Mills:

No, it is not a league table, Jersey is too small to have a league, you cannot even have a football league, it is too small. But all we are saying here is that we cannot ... this is the second largest public service in the Island, it consumes a lot of money, and it is under pressure, and it has some jolly good performance out there, there is some terrific teachers and terrific pupils, but there seems to be quite a long tail of poor performance, or underperformance, perhaps one could call it that. It is crucial and proper and correct that is smoked out. The first way of smoking it out is to put into the ... have in the public domain the basic data, performance data, on which one can begin to make judgments. You can debate those judgments, but you can make it. The public examination data is the best data that anyone has ever invented for measuring how schools have

done by their pupils. If you can think of other things, if the Minister can come to you tomorrow and say: “I have 10 other things, which are better”, I will be the first to say: “Hoorah”. But I have a sense that he will not because he does not have them, and you can talk value-added until the cows come home, but it does not go down very well out there, because you can have an interminable debate about what it means. It looks like a producer-led statistic designed to confuse. It might not be, but it looks like that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

There will be those who argue though, and we can talk about semantics of whether these are league tables, but, if these are produced year-on-year it would be very quick for somebody to tot up the ranks of the schools and say that X School is doing ... is at the top of the table, this school is at the bottom of the table, so ...

Mr. J. Mills:

I do not care whether it is top or bottom, I want to see how well it is doing; that is the test. It is not whether it is bottom or top.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It is a circular argument. How do we ...

Mr. J. Mills:

But at the ... yes, I know, but at the point it was ... as I perceive it, it was broadly unknown in Jersey that certain of our secondary schools were simply producing G.C.S.E. figures of this ... at such a low level. People knew it who wanted to know it, but it was not generally known, and it is a shocking state of affairs and something needs to be done.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

You commented there that ...

Mr. J. Mills:

You have to open it up to have that debate.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

You commented there that you do not care about league tables, again playing devil’s advocate, do you acknowledge the department’s concern regarding, maybe not your attitude to these statistics being used as league tables, but perhaps others in the round?

Mr. J. Mills:

Who, others? I mean, you know, public government departments exist to serve the public, and the trouble is they end up serving themselves. They are to serve the public and the public in this case are taxpayers, they are consumers of education, they are parents, and all sorts of things, and if we do not know how the monies that we are expending, or they are expending on our behalf are being ... you know, what the outcomes of those are, where do we get it? You do not tolerate that in the States when you ask hard questions about, you know, how people are doing for the money they are spending, and yet there has been a kind of bit of a conspiracy of silence on this. The department's duty, it seems to me, is to try and drive the policy debate on how we manage education in a complex and changing world, recognising all the difficulties, and do it from a sort of ... what I call a sort of a position of strength, a position of confidence. The department seems to be lacking confidence; that is why, if they were confident about all this stuff, they would publish it, or they would have published it in their own way, and it would be far better if they did it in their own way with their own commentary. They have expert people there, paid for by the taxpayer, who collect and collate and analyse this data until the cows come home, but it is not revealed to taxpayers. That is wrong, I think.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

When you say it is not a question of league tables, at the end of the day the argument will be put to you, and I presume it will be put tomorrow, John, at the end of the day people will say what you are driving at is comparisons, and the big issue is, are they defective comparisons or are they meaningful comparisons? So how would you answer that criticism?

Mr. J. Mills:

Well I would start by looking at the department's business plan where one of its success criteria is the comparison of G.C.S.E.s with the U.K., so they are quite interested in it because it is the best comparison they have, we all make comparisons the whole time, do we not? In the paper today the state of our roads to be compared with somewhere else; that is what we do. It is not a question of a legal sense, it is about public service performance; that is what it is about. I do not know whether we publish data about how the bins are ... how quickly and at what price they are collected in one Parish compared to another, it is quite a good comparison to make, because you will probably find that one Parish does it much better than another, and you can then learn from that and make efficiencies.

[17:00]

This is exactly the same. If people do not know what performance is being produced by publicly-funded bodies, well then you cannot have a debate, you just have to have a debate, and I was struck when I was reading your ... some of your minutes from your hearings a year ago, I was struck by some very good and strong words in the transcript from Deputy Reed about the importance of transparency, it is on the record, if you want to look it up, it was good words, I would subscribe completely to them, and I cannot speak for the Minister of course, but Ministers need to challenge their departments and stand up for taxpayers sometimes, I think.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:
Yes. Do you want a short break, John?

Mr. J. Mills:
No, I am all right.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:
All right, we will ... is that okay? Soldier on?

Deputy M. Tadier:
It may be necessary to take a short break to regroup after this question, do you think, or are we doing okay?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:
I think we are doing okay, unless members of the public ... I mean there are washrooms if people want to ...

Deputy M. Tadier:
I think question 6 very much follows on from what we were talking about, so it is about the Statistics Unit and why should they be involved, or how should they be involved in the collation and analysis of the exam results?

Mr. J. Mills:
Those are different questions. I think the question I would put back to you is, why should they not? We have a Statistics Unit, which has a lot of respect, because it has established its relative independence in the States system; it is peopled by some very good folk; and it is ... when the Statistics Unit speaks, it is recognised as speaking dispassionately and with statistical authority, which is not tampered with by politicians or administrators, and, if we are dealing with key statistical data about one aspect of public service performance, it seems logical to me to give

them the responsibility. That is just about efficient government, but it is also about ... it is also about credible government, because, if we want to know how things go in Jersey in the public realm in Jersey then we do have to have institutions, as we have with the Unit there, institutions in which we all have confidence that they are producing these right. The department has to do all the work, the department does the work, the department ... I would love to know exactly what resource they devote to collecting all this stuff, a lot of resource I should think, maybe too much, but it seems to me crucial that it is the Statistics Unit, which is given the responsibility to place this material in a proper manner into the public domain.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We will move on to another topic, and it flows in a way from the whole issue of examination results, John, and you have alluded to it. What inspection process for Island schools do you think should be in place?

Mr. J. Mills:

Well, something that is transparent, to quote the Minister's word again, for a start. The feeling one has, and I would bow to others who know more about it than me, but the feeling one has is that the inspection regime, to which Mr. Lundy referred at some length in his big letter in the newspaper, is opaque. Mr. Lundy referred to the system of these professional partners who go into the schools, nobody seems to know who these people are, nobody seems to know what their terms of reference are, nobody seems to know what they are paid. You guys who are interested in these subject, but you have never asked this question, never asked this question. Some transparency around that little bit of process would be quite helpful. It would also ... Mr. Lundy also said in his letter that he made comment that the department had a whole range of regular performance reports on the schools, none of those have been made public. I cannot see by what power the department is not making those public, it is information, which, under the Code of Practice, certainly should be readily in the public domain, it is not protected information. It is only when you create this transparency that you can begin to have the debate about performance and about accountability. So back in 1992 in ... under John Major's ministry, the 2 things went together, the performance tables were published and Ofsted was established, and the inspection process came out into the open, and the department was dead against it, they threw every argument in the book against it, including that they had to move office, everything was thrown against it, but the Secretary of State, Kenneth Clarke he was then, was powerful and determined and he said: "No, I am on the side of the consumer." That is a good minister in my book, and it went ahead, and the 2 were mixed up, and so the Ofsted process has gone through several iterations, it has not been a smooth ride, but it has opened things up and the publication of performance data through value-added, and the value-added tables, though the G.C.S.E.s and so

forth, has enabled the inspectors to develop a risk-based approach to inspections, because they can spot where problems lie. It is exactly the same in the National Health Service; that is exactly the same process that is followed, which is not followed here. This is how you gradually build up a culture of accountability, and I think a culture of improvement.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, as far as you are aware, you are making it very clear or inferring that an inspection system has to have a high element of independence.

Mr. J. Mills:

Yes, we have to, and I mean it is ... if the Minister is sticking to the guns he has stuck to in these various statements he has made, and I respect his position on it, it is not enough to say all is well, we have to see that all is well, and, if all is not well, and things are never completely well, it is crucial that those in positions of power and influence have the guts and the courage to say so and to say this is how we are going to make it better, not to deny there is a problem. Independent inspection, I imagine in Jersey a public independent inspection would reveal a whole range of jolly good things, no question about it, it is obvious, but it will also reveal some challenging things. One of the points I made in the example ... just slightly off the subject, one of the points I made in my piece in the newspaper, based on the data, was that I thought that we needed to look very closely, or I say we, at some of the performance in some of the A level subjects, quite interesting. I mean not enough debate about that. This data is very rich on that as well, and it just gives you the impression that in some subjects, not all, but some, we look a bit off the pace. Now that is just by ... these are the things that an inspection system smokes out, and it would smoke out issues such as whether the growth in collaboration between the schools at A level is helping or hindering outcomes, a good question. Do we know the answer? Does the department talk about it? Did they issue discussion documents about it? Did you ask them about it? Did they come and tell you about it? No. It is these kinds of things, which drive the ... which drive improvement forward. If you spend one hour on the department of Education website in the U.K., well you will find all of this, it is quite easy to be an expert on it these days.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Of course one of the major criticisms of Ofsted has been - and I am again repeating the devil's advocate argument - that they have been very narrow, there has been a preoccupation, rather like I suppose you may have or might have, with exam results, and that they are not very good at measuring what you might call the softer sides, you know, schools that are really labouring mightily and doing a very good job with a difficult cohort for example, lack of parental involvement, and so forth.

Mr. J. Mills:

Totally fair, it is not ... nothing is straightforward, I would agree that, to the nth degree, but it does not mean you should not do it, and bit by bit you can make it better and you can improve the process. The inspection regime in the National Health Service is a very good comparator, because exactly the same issues have arisen there, over-reliance on sort of tick-boxing and formulaic approaches, and there is a much bigger attempt now to be a bit softer and to think much harder about some of the softer sides of patient care, and so the issues are the same. But in no case could you say there was no case for doing it, because it is the way you improve, and a good school is not frightened of inspection, public inspection, a good school prepares for it and a good school tells the world that they have done jolly well on this but they know they have to do more on that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

In some of the department's responses, the directors for example, there is a large emphasis placed upon the role of school governors; that they receive these reports for example, and they are obviously expected to act upon them. From your role as a school governor, or a Chair of school governors, and from your observation of how the Jersey system works, do you think they have the required degree of independence and detachment to sort of really, really act as a, you know, a counterweight to the weight of the establishment so to speak?

Mr. J. Mills:

I suspect not. I do not know enough to be able to comment, but the one thing I was really struck by, and I just make ... because I think it is quite telling, and it is not a criticism or anything, but I noticed when I looked up the list of the governors at Beaulieu, that Mr. Lundy was a governor of Beaulieu, and I just ... that just seems to be so completely wrong, he has a different role. If he wants to challenge Beaulieu to justify their taxpayer subsidy, let him do that from his perch up the road, but to be on the ... to be compromised and conflicted by being on the Board of Governors, that just does not seem right, and we ... in the wider sphere, as you well know, Chairman, we have had this intense debate in the last number of years about trying to reduce these kind of conflicts, so for example States Members are not on many boards as once they were, because it was sullying the roles. That is just one example. So one has a sense that the governing bodies are probably not as independently formulated as they might be. I do not want to be critical, but I just have a sense that might be the case, and, if people think it is not the case, well let us have a debate about it, but let the department put out a list, or perhaps send to you a list, which can go on the record, of all the governors at all the schools, let us see who they are, what are the appointment processes, who does the hiring, who does the firing, what is the terms, what are the

expenses, let us ask them. With respect to you as States Members, you have never asked these questions, but they are crucially important, and they are probably more important than some of the questions you do ask about certain organisations.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We will carry on. Jeremy?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

You stole my question, but for the record we will ask it anyway. How do you think school performance should be holistically measured and reported?

Mr. J. Mills:

Well I am struggling to know what you mean by "holistically".

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

In the round.

Mr. J. Mills:

In the round, all right. With any reportage, you need to have a balance, you need hard and soft, big and small, narrow and broad. You cannot duck public examination results, because they exist, and they are externally moderated and people respect them, employers demand them, universities and F.E. colleges want them, and parents want them. So that is one starting point. If we can get to a situation where there is credible value-added measurement that can be used in a public environment to measure performance, or to account for performance, then well and good, but I believe that when I see it frankly, and I think the value-added process, as it is, should, and probably does, have a greater role in what you might call the constant monitoring of pupils' progress as they go through, but the external monitoring, you know, when the taxpayer or the legislator or the citizen sees how these expensive organisations are doing, I am not quite sure about that. I think also there should be some higher degree of ... probably a higher degree of public reporting, so that we all know more about the good things that these schools do. All the schools are doing great things, we do not hear that much about it, I think the schools could be enjoined to do a little more of that, especially in accounting for taxpayers' money, I think.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. Monty?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you have an opinion on the impact of the publication of school league tables that have taken place in England?

Mr. J. Mills:

The correct term is performance tables and in my judgment, and my experience at the time, being a policy maker at the time when this was first done, the impact has been wholly beneficial. Been tough, and some schools have found it very hard when ... and some local education authorities have found it very hard, and some officials have found it very hard, some Ministers have found it very hard, when things were revealed that are not as they would quite like them to be. But the culture of ... the climate and culture of accountability that has developed is remarkable, and I know a lot of teachers criticise it, it is jolly hard work, but it is remarkable, it has put a much greater degree of power in the hands of people who do have choices, and it has put, I think, a great deal more power in the hands of parliamentarians in their job of holding the executive to account.

[17:15]

Deputy M. Tadier:

There is a difference of course between parliamentarians having access to information and the public, and we are glad that you have access to this information, because it means that we have now by extension.

Mr. J. Mills:

The fact that the department conceded that this was not information that could be withheld under the Code of Practice means that it is public information.

Deputy M. Tadier:

The flip-side of the coin, and we have had submissions, which would say that there is little evidence to suggest that league tables have led to rising standards. There is also the allegation that league tables or comparisons lead to schools ... to having unhealthy competition between schools and also it discourages lack of collaboration. How would you respond to those criticisms?

Mr. J. Mills:

They sound like excuses to me in truth. You cannot have a debate about educational policy, about educational standards, about educational performance, about whether we are doing right by our young people or not, you cannot have that debate absent a foundation, a body of evidence,

the best body of evidence you have, warts and all, to tell you how it ... you know, so you can start off, you just cannot do it. You are just in a vacuum. The debate in Jersey about education has been in a bit of a vacuum and I fear that this upcoming Green Paper will be a continuation of that. I hope it is not, but I have a fear that it might be.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But it could be that both sides of the coin are valid, so, on the one hand you could say that league tables do empower the public, they empower parents, parliamentarians, and schools themselves, but on the other hand they cause unintended consequences.

Mr. J. Mills:

League tables are the not the issue; information is the issue. Information is the issue, and then how we use it, we can have a row or a debate about how you use it, but if you do not have it you cannot use it, and you cannot have a ... you cannot have a sound and well-founded debate about whether we should have schools like this or like this or like this if we do not have the information in front of us.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you see that as a temporary problem then that there will be consequences of course on both sides, but ultimately ...

Mr. J. Mills:

Well it changes the terms of the debate. I mean what has happened in the U.K. in the last 20 years is that the terms of the debate have been changed. In the 1980s, when the Thatcher ministry came in, and Sir Keith Joseph went to the Education Department in 1979, and he wrote about this in later life, and he said he was so horrified by the culture of secrecy and inwardness, and he was even more horrified by the response of his officials when he said: “It is time to open things up.” You know, I mean it was a ... you know, it was a sort of mega Sir Humphrey reaction, if you like, and Keith Joseph stuck to his guns and he started getting some ... the first thing he did, he got the inspection, the old style inspection reports out into the public domain in about 1982 or so, and that began to turn people’s minds and that was one of the drivers that led to the new G.C.S.E. system in about 1988 and the National Curriculum at the end of the 1980s. There was a recognition that something had to be done, standards were not good enough and people had the wool pulled over their eyes. Now I am not saying that is necessarily the case in Jersey, but it seems to me so incomprehensible that the department does not stand up and shout to the rafters: “We have some great performance here, this is our ... this is what we do, these are the

achievements of our young people, these are the achievements of our teachers, these are the challenges we still have to face. Help us do it."

Deputy M. Tadier:

How would you see that the publication of results like these would change the terms of debate in Jersey?

Mr. J. Mills:

Because information empowers people, there is just no contest; it empowers people, just like ... that is the argument of having a public library, that information empowers people, like the internet.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I understand that, but what would the terms of ... change in the terms of debate be that you would be envisaging?

Mr. J. Mills:

Because it would enable us to have a ... well, 2 things, firstly I think it is just an intrinsic point, information is a good thing and hiding information seems to me to be a bad thing; that is number one, that is probably the most important point. Secondly, it enables interested parties, whether they are teachers or legislators or whoever, to form judgments that are hopefully informed by evidence, because we tend to form judgments that are not based on evidence most of the time, do we not? But evidence is quite helpful. Thirdly, it is not the be-all and end-all, I think it helps ... it would help us, as a society, and as an Island, think about challenges. Some of the challenges that are facing the education department have been rather lost in this debate, you know, the starting point of that furore in the school fees last year was the budget, you know, and the spending review, so ... and those kinds of pressures have not gone away. Is there a way of doing all this better and more cheaply and more efficiently? I do not know, there probably is, but without knowing what is going on at the moment and how many bangs we are getting for current bucks, we will never get anywhere. So there are issues ... there are arguments of principle there, but also arguments of practice. If then also, as I hope this Green Paper that they are talking about, upcoming soon, I hope it is going to enable some debate to happen on the structure of the school system in Jersey, whether it has changed or not, it is worth having the debate about it, and it needs to be founded on the facts, and so I hope that in the first section of their Green Paper they set out, in the clearest possible terms, the facts, how many children are in each school, what are they all doing, what are the performance results, what are the budgets, what are the staff numbers, you know, what is the pay bill as a proportion of total, what is the overhead cost, how

much is the department hanging over them, you know, what is the ... all those things. Without that, you cannot have a debate, I think.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Are you aware, just as a matter of interest, there has been a recent report published by the Education Select Committee in the House of Commons, which has said that league tables are a very narrow ... I mean the traditional criticisms, and that ...

Mr. J. Mills:

Yes, they are.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

... there should be what amounts to a report card and they list sort of all the various factors that should form part of that card.

Mr. J. Mills:

I have no problem with that at all. The word “league table” is wrong, we are looking at the measurement of a public ... the performance of a public service; that is what we are looking at, and we need whatever tools we have available to do that measurement with, we should utilise, and nobody seems to have come up with anything by and large except public examinations, so they are a good measure, but, if there are others, some of the sheer sort of financial measures would be very interesting as well.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I ask your opinion on ... we talked about the limitation of these measures, with G.C.S.E.s they stop at 16 and A levels can measure you up to 18, what ideas would you have about measuring success over a longer period of time during perhaps the lifetime of students once they have left school?

Mr. J. Mills:

Well it is interesting that, and I am not sure I know the exact answer, but I do ... so I am going to answer it in a roundabout way for me. I notice that the Secretary of State for Education in England has recently given his strong support to a proposal ... it is a research proposal at the moment, to carry forward school measurement to the university level, this is an extension of value-added in a sense, to look at how pupils achieve through those years. There comes a point when you cannot do it anymore, but you could probably take it up to first degree level, and you can soon pull out some interesting stuff, I am quite sure, it seems like a good idea to me. To the

extent that most Jersey students going off to college are known to the department, because they get fees and loans and what have you, I am sure it would be a very easy matter for the department to track them, indeed I think the department already does track them, have not asked that question yet, and we would be able to find out, on the one hand how successful many of them were, on the other hand we would find out how many dropped out for example. You know, that is taxpayers' money down the drain, for example. So these are good things.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But if I put it to you, and, sorry, I do not want to labour the point, if somebody leaves school and gets 10 G.C.S.E.s, they get their A levels, they get their degree, and 10 years later they are unemployed, and somebody leaves school without any G.C.S.E.s at all, they are self-employed by the time they are 30, they have a good business ...

Mr. J. Mills:

Life is like that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But that would not be registered at the G.C.S.E. results.

Mr. J. Mills:

We cannot register everything, we have to draw a line somewhere, but you have to ... we must not lose sight of the fact that what we are really talking about here is how we think intelligently about measuring what are schools doing or not doing. You can take that a bit further forward, you can certainly take it up to the end of a first degree, but it probably ceases to be relevant then. I mean you just have to ... you know, we all go in these myriad ways as we get older, so I just think you have to draw a line somewhere, at least from a public policy point of view, and someone else might enjoy doing it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

The next question I think we have sort of swept up, it is about limited transparency and publishing exam results, but I do not think you will accept the premise of that question, John, so we will move on.

Mr. J. Mills:

I just do not ... I just think information is information, Chairman, and the thing you must not do is have it tampered with or moderated by someone who thinks they know best. That is why the States Statistics Unit should have this data and should take responsibility for its proper

publication, with commentary, and the day it is published we should have a proper commentary, not put together by me on my dining room table, but by the experts that are paid for by us in the department, and they are good people, I have met them, and that will just take our debate to a higher level, a more useful level, if we are going to have a think about some of the hard choices ahead on how we organise things in this little place.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

It slightly does not follow the theme, but I just want to bring it in, obviously one of the things that has come up time and time again in the exchange of letters, for example, in the *J.E.P.* (*Jersey Evening Post*) and in other documents, is that no one in sort of a rational frame of mind would ever design a secondary education system as we have in Jersey. Do you think, and I am putting I suppose the devil's advocate view here, do you think, in mitigation, really that whole system creates so many problems, it just needs to be ... if you are seriously looking at reform, if you are seriously looking at encouraging students, you cannot run with a system, which has 41 per cent selective entry to it ... sorry, fee-paying element to it.

Mr. J. Mills:

You are probably right, but I am not saying that I am saying that, because the cost disruption of restructure can easily outweigh things, and I think ... I do not have a well-formed view on this, but there ought to be a debate, I mean this is something that your committee should engage in. I think we should start by thinking about incremental change; that is what I think we should do, because, in my experience of government, incremental change generally takes you further and faster than major structural change, unless things are so unbelievably terrible, and you can think of certain things, and I am just saying this because these are in my head, and I shall probably be very unpopular among some people, but there are some things, which seem to me to have to be done, the first is there has to be a shift of resource from the fee-paying schools to the free schools, that seems to me to be self-evident. There is a problem here and it needs to be tackled, and if resources are tight you need to reallocate resources. That is tough, that is tough politically, but it seems to me to be absolutely essential. If there is no more resource then you have to transfer resource, and if that means that people whose children are at the fee-paying schools have to pay more, so be it. You do not have to make a great hike, you can set a target of 2 or 3 percentage points above R.P.I. (retail price index) for 5 years on fees, whatever it is, you can create a resource transfer mechanism, and the second thing you can do it so think holistically, to use the word, about whether we are spending all the monies that we spend on what you might call social action, or action against social disadvantage, whether we really are targeting that effectually. It will be a very brave person ever to say that sort of money was targeted effectively, because it never is, you can have a go at it, but you ... there are obviously things you could do

better. Those are factors, those are things, which can be done without any structural change. My instinct is that the 14 ... the selection at 14 sort of does not look right anymore, it might have done a long time ago, it was a model that was followed in a lot of local education authorities in the old days when most children left elementary school at 14 anyway, only a small elite going on to grammar school.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is it more of a question to do with selection itself, because there are arguments that have been made that, if you are going to select, it is better to do it at 14 rather than at 11?

Mr. J. Mills:

Yes, you can do it ... well, you can argue any of this, you can have selection at age one or age 18, you can have it whenever you want, but it just looks a bit disruptive, it looks a bit inequitable, you have to draw ... the line is drawn. How is this line ... this one child is on this side of the line, no choice, this child is on that side of the line, has got a choice. How is that line drawn? It is a bit, what is the word, a bit sort of gobbledy-gook, a bit ... all these scores, you know, these ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

You are not advocating socialism by any means?

[17:30]

Mr. J. Mills:

No, but when I look back at the debate in England about the comprehensive system, which was so keenly and bitterly fought when I was a student, and when I was a young player in the civil service, looking back now, it ... I think the people who advocated the comprehensives had it about right, because it was ... schools are an instrument of social policy, and if you want to ensure that, in the best way possible, everyone has a reasonably equitable ... an equal chance, or equal opportunity I should say, then you have to create the conditions for that, and we seem to be not creating the conditions, partly because I think we are giving special benefit to a certain group, not only probably in terms of sheer resources, but in terms of what I will call attention. All the attention is focused on the fee-paying sector, or the selective sector, as one perceives it, and people go around and say ... lots of people in the paper have said this: “So these children cannot do this there, they need to do vocational stuff, you know, they are at that school.” That is so bad, it is wrong, it is not right for the 21st century and it is just wrong. So, if you are looking ahead for Jersey over the next quarter of a century, it probably ought to change, but I think one has to do that really quite carefully. You could ... there are several things you could do though, firstly you

could ... the first thing to do is to create choice. I am very struck by this, at the moment the catchment system is very rigid for those 4 schools, and choice is a little bit illusory. If you open it up to real choice, you open then the door to enabling those schools to present a special offer, one might be a technology specialist school, one might be a language specialist school, you can conceive arrangements, which are now quite well embedded in the United Kingdom, for bringing private sector sponsorship and support into schools, it is what you do when money is tight, it is what you do, and you can suddenly make a fairly dull school very attractive, and choice drives that. Now that is not possible at the moment because if you are in this primary school here, or this area, you are told to go to that school, unless you are particularly bolshy and very clever that is where you go. I understand that the department wants to change that, but they do not want to liberalise it, they just want to change it, they want to link catchments to schools, primary schools. That seems to me quite a controversial idea, it is something that would need some quite careful thinking, because it might have some very odd effects that may perhaps not have been thought through, but it does not create choice, it just replaces one set of absence of choice by another, which is wrong.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Could you tell us more about this idea of private sponsorship for certain schools?

Mr. J. Mills:

Well, let me take ... I am going to use my own example, because I am very ... the school I am Chairman of Governors at is a charity, so I am Chairman of the trustees of a charity, and we have charitable obligations, which go back hundreds of years, and in the brave new world, if you like, of educational public benefit, which we need to respond to, we have taken a view, in our school, and it is the same I know in certain businesses, private businesses, that we should try and pass over some of our expertise, which has a price or a value, to those less fortunate. We are in a very deprived borough in London, and there are schools there and organisations crying out for support and assistance, so we have taken some leads, we sponsored 2 academies in the Borough of Brent, which is a fabulous challenge, these are really poor schools, so they are trying to make a fresh start. The academy process brings in private sponsorship as well as sort of charitable sponsorship, I suppose I should put it like that, and it is a slow business, but those schools have the potential to be transformed. For example, we now have, in our combined cadet force in our school, we now have a long waiting list for these boys and girls from Brent to join.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What is the benefit to the private sponsor?

Mr. J. Mills:

We have a charitable obligation.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Not to ... you said there were private ...

Mr. J. Mills:

Private businesses have charitable obligations as well, they can fulfil them in many ways, but it can also be more hard-nosed than that. So, for example, let us say for example, in this Island there are one or 2 quite significant I.T. firms who make a fortune out of States contracts, among other things, but they are good firms and they are at the cutting edge, and getting one or other of them ... let us take one of the secondary schools, getting one of these firms to be associated with a school in an overt way to transfer values, to transfer ideas, to give practical assistance, does not have to be ... we are not talking about big money necessarily here, it is about ... to quote Andrew Adonis, who was the Minister in the last government, he said it was about getting excellent schools to set about, so to speak, transferring the D.N.A. of their success to others; it is about helping schools that are not at the top of the tree to get better, to improve.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is that brand loyalty we are talking about?

Mr. J. Mills:

No, not in the slightest, not in the slightest. But if you have a school in Jersey and the children are very keen to learn I.T., it is a really important skill, and it is a very expensive thing to learn, because you need a lot of kit, and you need 25 sets of everything, and so forth, it seems to wear out in about a year and it keeps needing to be renewed, and some kind of private sponsorship in that kind of sphere; that is just good policy, it is how the world is going, and I am not saying you should do it, but these are the kinds of things you can do, but you can only do it, you can only do it if you open up the choice, otherwise you cannot do it. I worry as a private citizen that the department and the system is just not up for it, because they are not thinking about this, they are being defensive, saying: “Oh, we must not tell anyone about these results, they are not very good.” That is just the wrong way to go about things, and it will be to our loss, looking a long time ahead to when I am dead and gone but you will be much older.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you for that. We will go to the next question by Jeremy.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

That leads in well. In your literature you referred to this term “leadership and culture”; what does leadership and culture mean in the context of a school education to you?

Mr. J. Mills:

The most crucial person in a school is the Head; that is the chief executive, and the Head sets the tone; that is what a leader does, and the leader leads by example and by determination and by hard work and effort and by inspiration, and when you see organisations with strong leaders, you know what leadership is, and when you see organisations with poor leadership, you know that. The hard bit is that bit in the middle where you are never quite sure whether you are seeing good leadership or not. In my experience, and my judgment, young people respond to leadership very well, and it is probably our duty as older people to help them to be even more responsive to that, it is about role models and it is about inspiration, and it just seems to be ... it is how good firms succeed, it is how good governments succeed, you know, a good government without a leader is not a good government.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

That is general management talk. What do you think about leadership and culture in a school, any particular issues?

Mr. J. Mills:

All I would say is that, if you do your research into ... you probably need to look at England, because this is where some of these examples are, and there are examples of inspirational Heads who have turned around poorly-performing schools in a way, which is remarkable, and I will give one example, I know he will not mind me saying his name, he was a colleague of mind at school back in the 1960s. His name is Sir Pritpal Singh – he was knighted for his services to education – and he has been Head of Ealing Common School in London for many years. When he was appointed it was a seriously failing school in a very difficult area but he turned it round, through leadership and determination, so that it is now one of the best. He is an inspirational leader, bringing to his school a clear vision of the change needed to turn it round. I am sure he would be very pleased to give evidence to you about school leadership and what makes an excellent school to which parents queue up to send their children, regardless of social factors’. He is a great guy, and you see you are in the presence of someone special, and that is how it is. That is how it is, and it is very hard to define, but we have all experienced that in our own lives, I can think back to teachers who inspired me, and indeed Heads, and university tutors, and I thought of someone who did not inspire one, and I am sure you can do that too. So it seems to me that, I mean schools are either ... schools are organisations, they are businesses, they are

public sector businesses, quite big businesses, they need good leadership, they need good governance, they need good management structures; that is how you drive performance.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

So, if we just take just the free schools, the non-selective, non ... where, in the context of what you have said, where do you feel that perhaps the leadership or the culture is failing, if it is?

Mr. J. Mills:

Well because I think the Heads have to be allowed to lead. I sense that they are not, or not sufficiently. They might dispute that, and they would have to say what they wanted to say, but I have a sense that they are not given the freedom within their operating budget, to do that which perhaps they wish they could do.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is it purely a financial restraint then they are talking about?

Mr. J. Mills:

Everyone has financial constraints, you have to set a budget, but once you have a budget you can do things with it. They do not really have the freedom to hire or fire, they do not have much freedom around the sanctions on pupils who are disruptive, and so on and so forth, and, if you want a school to be a good school, you have to allow the chief executive to run it, and then the governors to govern, not the governors to run it, the governors to govern it, and to oversee and hold the Head and his senior team to account, and I just ... one just has the sense that the department, in its great wisdom, is a bit overbearing, a bit old-fashioned, you know, the department knows best, the department does this, the department sits on all the boards, you know, it just does not look like the way to do it. I suspect that the department is resource heavy, I would guess. I have no knowledge of that, I just throw the question out because it is important to raise it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

But you were the Chief Executive of course, so you must have picked up something about the culture and the workings of ...

Mr. J. Mills:

I did, but of course in those days I had no authority whatsoever over the Education Department, unlike the current Chief Executive whose terms are quite different to mine. But many bits of government are like this, and observing change is quite interesting. I have been involved recently

with the Planning Department and I have to say I am mightily impressed by the way that they have faced up to some very serious failings of administrative practice and so forth. I said in a States report, I said they were guilty of maladministration, they got things so wrong. They accepted it and they have moved on and they are learning from it, and I am mightily impressed. You know, and that is what you have to do to get it better, however challenging, however constrained you are, however resourced, and I just have a feeling in my bones that our Education Department here and the structures around it have not kind of ... they have coasted along not really worrying about those things, and maybe times are now tougher and they need to ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can we press you on that, because unfortunately we cannot operate on feelings in bones, we know where bones get us.

Mr. J. Mills:

If you give me the evidence, I will give you some evidence, but, absent the evidence, the department's central budget figures are very opaque, they are very opaque indeed, it is very hard to work out from the published accounts what the overhead cost of the department is. I just have a suspicion in my bones that it is quite high, and it might be that it is too high. I am just making that as ... that is my view. If I have the evidence in front of me I will either confirm or revise that view, but it seems, in my experience of working in government for 40 years nearly, overheads are generally higher than they seem, and generally probably too high, especially in an area where you want that frontline delivery, the police force, the health service, the schools, you name it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Well, overheads are high across the States.

Mr. J. Mills:

Well the States has a habit of making high overheads, because you keep wanting things, and systems are free to grow, but if you want to free up Heads, if that is your policy objective, and that I would advocate, then the consequence of that is you do not need the level of direction or central control, whatever you call it, from the centre, you create a freedom, and that enables you to transfer resource.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

If I can just pose a question then, just as a slight comparison, although to be careful, compare that to Hautlieu, we have fee-paying schools with the leadership that they have, compared to Hautlieu, which again is a non-fee-paying school, I beg your pardon, non-fee-paying, is the leadership and

... the culture is definitely different, but how do you see the leader or do you see the culture as being different?

Mr. J. Mills:

I have no comment. I have no ... I have insufficient knowledge on that to comment, I am afraid.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

All right.

[17:45]

Mr. J. Mills:

Could I make one other point, Chairman, please, just on the department, which I think is also important, just come to it, that the department's overall budget set by you is around about £100 million, around about, the Minister will correct all this if I am wrong. The amount spent on schools, you know, in the budget lines for primaries and secondaries, is £20 million-something, or maybe it is £30 million-something, it is quite low. The Department does lots of other things, sport, education and sport and culture. It is worth asking the question, if one wants to focus on school improvement, whether that is a good model, whether it would not be better to have a Minister, and indeed a director and such like, wholly focused on this one crucial area of business, rather than being diverted by all the things that must cross their desks under the heading of sport and culture, swimming pools and Fort Regent and all that stuff.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That figure would not include university grants, et cetera, would it?

Mr. J. Mills:

Well you might include that, but I mean ... but the department is not just an education department, it is quite striking that, they do lots of things, and good leadership and good management and good policy direction is often about focus, so I just again ... it is just that is a thought that I throw out and wait for people to shoot it down.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think something we have considered, certainly you have other departments, which are perhaps smaller, which have Assistant Ministers with special responsibility, and it is perhaps strange that does not already happen at Education.

Mr. J. Mills:

It could do with a makeover; I think that is how I would characterise it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Can we move on, Monty? We are going to try and finish for 6.00 p.m.

Deputy M. Tadier:

We are pretty much winding up now. I will try and make ... if I can ask 2 questions, they are linked. The question written down is: "Which jurisdictions do you think the Island schools can feasibly be compared to?" but also if you could tell us about maybe what you think are model jurisdictions that we should be looking to for inspiration?

Mr. J. Mills:

That is a very interesting and difficult question and I have no particular wisdom ... I mean it seems to me to be unavoidable, to the extent that we are using English or U.K. public examinations in Jersey, it is unavoidable that we will be making comparisons with the U.K., and there is no point in being shy about that, it is a big enough market to make some very interesting comparisons with, with all the caveats, with all the things one does. Looking carefully into the U.K. data, I am quite ... I always think Northern Ireland is quite interesting. I mean it is still much ... it is very small, Northern Ireland, although still much bigger than Jersey, last summer Northern Ireland had about 180,000 G.C.S.E. entries compared with our 8,000, you know, there is quite a big difference still, but even so, that might be quite interesting, and they have some selective systems in Northern Ireland, and they are very proud of those grammar schools. You dig into the ... I have not really done this, but I did try to anticipate this, and I did a little bit of homework over lunch, and I am quite struck, if one looks at the ... Northern Ireland figures overall are not far different from the U.K., they are not big enough to influence the U.K., and so they are fairly close to Jersey's in aggregate, but there are one or 2 quite interesting things that are quite different. I noticed for example that Northern Ireland is way ahead on music, this is the A to C measure again, they are a long way ahead on history, they are very far ahead on classics, because the school system in its wisdom is not offering that at all here, people have to do it privately. I just get an impression, and it is only an impression, just from perusing the - this is from the U.K. data - that in what I would call the harder subjects, I do not mean that in academically hard, I mean the harder as opposed to softer, they seem to be doing some things that we might be able to learn a bit from.

Deputy M. Tadier:

For example, when you talk about hard subjects, sciences ...

Mr. J. Mills:

History is quite a hard subject to get good grades in, you have to be able to write stuff and think hard, and it is just that is just how things are, and when I see that Northern Ireland has reached very high figures on the separate sciences, for example, in the 90s; that is across the whole cohort, so they must be doing something right, and all I would say, it is probable that Jersey could learn from somewhere like that, because you can always learn. The only other thing I would say, there are other countries that are using the U.K. qualifications system, I mean Hong Kong does for example, and I am sure you would learn a lot by digging into the education system there. You would learn quite a lot in Singapore, you would be scared if you went to Singapore frankly, which is one reason why we need to do something about this. There are a few other smaller ... but in practice you have to look to the U.K., the U.K. is where the policy drivers are, the U.K. is now ... the U.K. Government is now busy reviewing the national curriculum, it is reviewing teacher assessment, it is reviewing teacher training, you name it, it is reviewing it, and all of this will rub off on us, because that is how it is.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We are nearly at the end, but I wonder, the last question in a way just says: "What are you going to do to address this situation?" but could I phrase it differently. If, John, you were the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, you had inherited this system about which you are obviously very critical, how would you handle the situation from now onwards?

Mr. J. Mills:

I am critical of aspects of it. I would probably start by being very unpopular and hiring some expensive consultants. I just have a feeling, and I know that this is not evidence, but I do not have evidence, that this is a public service that could do with a thorough look. That is not about saying it is broke, but it is probably saying there are some aspects that do not look as if they are working as well as they should, or as well as children deserve. So I think that is what I would do, but I think, without that kind of dispassionate assessment, you cannot make progress against the system, and that can be very powerful if done right. But secondly the information arena must be opened up, and that includes not just this kind of data, but also the value-added work that the department appears to have been doing, which it has never told anyone about, and also the inspection work, it has to be. There is no earthly reason, there is no reason, it is against States policy, under the Code of Practice, which all of you agreed unanimously, including Deputy Reed in 2004. It is against the Code of Practice to retain this information, it is manifestly wrong, and the sooner the department recognises that and comes up front, things will get better; we can start talking about this in a proper way. The department is producing a Green Paper, as I understand, quite soon I think, and, if what I have so far learned is correct, it may be a great disappointment,

and I hope the draft I saw a while ago will have been extensively reworked, because it did not look to me to be a very strong document, it looked as if it was seeking to justify the status quo, which I do not think is good enough. So I think the other thing I would do, if I was the Minister, I do not want to be the Minister, I can think of nothing worse, with respect to him, but the thing you have to do, and the one thing I learned in my time in Whitehall, is that the Ministers who succeed are the Ministers who challenged, and the Ministers who failed were the Ministers who did their department's bidding, and I can think of so many examples of that.

Deputy M. Tadier:
Which of those 2 would you say that we have at the moment as a Minister?

Mr. J. Mills:
I think if you draw a curve with your spectrum on it, many of the Jersey Ministers in my view would not be quite at the top, but I would hesitate to put anyone right at the bottom. But the system here is very powerful, the Ministers do not have much independent resource, just like you do not, States Members do not have much independent resource, I know that is sometimes a bone of contention, and it is really, really important that the bureaucracy is opened up and is challenged, because that is how you make change happen, and when you see it being done, when you overcome those sorts of obstacles, you can really begin to make progress. When Ofsted was ... I was involved in the policy decision to establish Ofsted, and the plan, which had high political backing, was strongly resisted by the Department, not least because one sensed that the reform would empower others, as consumers. The change.....was not perfect.....

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:
Final questions.

Deputy M. Tadier:
Have we asked 13, is that we are doing?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:
Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:
Well I think ... I do not know if I have anything to add, Roy.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:
All right. Jeremy?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

No, nothing further.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

What about you, John, any final comments?

Mr. J. Mills:

No, I do not think ... one point, I have this 300 pages of material, which was published by the department upon its giving it to me, and I really do hope that in a very short order now it is put properly into the public domain, with proper commentary, proper context, all that stuff, so that people can read and form opinions. But I think there comes a point where you can only ... I am down to about page 50, there is another 300 to go, and I think what I will do is deposit this in the public library, unless the Minister commits to proper publication in the next week or 2, which I think he ... under States policy I think he is obliged to do, but, if he chooses not to, well then that is what needs to be done, because we just have to get a debate rolling, and it is not a debate that can be led by one person, it is a debate that has to be led, well by you, and the collective has to lead it, the producers and the consumers and the parents, and what is most striking is, at the end of it all there is the kids, the youngsters, and I come back to the point I said at the beginning, this data suggests that we, Jersey, are letting down a lot of youngsters by not enabling them to have the life chances, as measured by their attainment at school, that they deserve and that they require in the world today. That is a really, really, really bad position for us to be in, and we must change it. If it requires radical change, you make radical change, if it does not, we do not, but if we just give up and say it is too difficult, then we should all turn out the lights.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

On that note, I would like to thank you very much, you have been a very robust witness. I think we have heard some very interesting issues and I suspect that we will form ... there will be some very interesting responses tomorrow when we reconvene. We will reconvene at midday and, as I said to Members, to latecomers, I am sorry it is at midday, but we could not get the after-work slot, but the Minister was busy and that was the time we were left with, so we will be here at midday. Deputy Tadier unfortunately will not be with us, we shall miss him, so you will have to put up with Deputy Maçon and myself.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Quality over quantity.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Oh yes, but anyway, John, thank you very much, and thank you for all your hard work, even though some people might disagree with where it has led you. Thank you. Thank you to the public.

[17:58]